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LIFE of CHRIST

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Martin Feuerstein

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THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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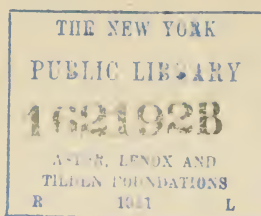
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✠ **JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY,**
Archbishop of New York.

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THE LIFE OF CHRIST

PART I

General Preparation for the Coming of the Redeemer.

CHAPTER I

JERUSALEM AND THE JEWISH NATION AT THE TIME OF CHRIST'S COMING

1. HEROD, THE TYRANT

BEFORE we enter upon the consideration of the glorious advent of that Lord of hosts foretold by the prophet Malachias, let us cast a glance at the beautiful city of Jerusalem, and also at the condition of the Jewish people from whom this Ruler is to spring and to whom He is to come. Herod, the stranger, had obtained the scepter and now ruled over Judea. He was a wicked and bloodthirsty hypocrite, who sometimes affected to entertain great respect for the religion of the Jews and profound reverence for the one true God; at other times would introduce the abominations of idolatry, persecute the Jews, and even put their most respectable citizens to death. In his jealousy, he murdered his relatives, and even his own children; and by artifice or force gradually dispersed all the descendants of the Machabean princes and those of the high-priest. Toward the close of his unprincipled life he suffered much from a cancer; worms preyed upon his entrails, and so intense was his pain that he sought to hasten his death by his own hand. But the age-stricken arm was powerless to add one more murder to its long category, so he was compelled to pass five days in the agony of death, and at length died in anguish and despair. Previous to his demise he had divided the kingdom of Juda among his four sons, Archelaus, Herod, Antipas, and Philip.

2. THE HERODIAN TEMPLE

It may be a matter of surprise to the reader to learn that this impious man rebuilt the temple of Jerusalem. Actuated by a desire to propitiate his Jewish subjects and to perpetuate his own name, he lavished upon this building such an amount of money and labor that it even surpassed Solomon's temple in size and splendor. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, thus describes this magnificent edifice: "In order to gain space for the increased size of the temple, Herod built in the valley, at the foot of Mount Moria, a wall four hundred feet in height, and the space intervening between the mountain-side and this wall he filled with an immense amount of earth. The entire wall supporting this newly made ground consisted of large square blocks of white marble. Above this foundation arose the temple in terrace form. The outside building was called the court of the Gentiles, and was enclosed by a wall of marble nearly a Roman half mile in length. Several large doors opened through this enclosing-wall, and on it were galleries, saloons, and many lofty spires or 'pinnacles of the temple.' From these heights the priests used to blow the trumpets announcing the morning and evening hours of sacrifice, and proclaiming the different solemnities of the year. This outer court was open to all, and within its precincts were the temple market, in which were bought and sold animals for the sacrifices and other articles for religious uses, such as wine, oil, meal, etc. Even the money-exchange had a place here."

Within this outer court, and several steps higher, was Solomon's porch, or the court for the Jews; likewise, surrounded by a wall on which were stately colonnades, elegant corridors, flanked by apartments for those who ministered in the temple. Only Israelites, to the exclusion of foreigners, were admitted here; and within its favored walls Jesus often delivered His most touching lessons of wisdom, and wrought many of His greatest miracles. Into the next apartment, several steps still higher, Jesus never entered, for it was the court of the priests.

Twelve steps still higher was the temple proper, divided into the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. Nearly the whole upper structure was composed of immense square blocks of a brilliantly white marble; so that a stranger approaching the city from a distance would imagine that he saw a high moun-

tain of peculiar shape, having its summit capped with snow. The main roof was of cypress-wood, overlaid with heavy plates of gold. The rebuilding of this temple began sixteen years before the birth of Jesus Christ, and was going on during His lifetime, and continued till the thirtieth year after His ascension. "Six and forty years," said the Jews to Jesus when He spoke of raising the temple of His body in three days, "has this temple been building."

3. DESCRIPTION OF JERUSALEM

The enlargement and beautifying of the temple was not the only work accomplished by the ostentatious Herod. He built whole cities where none existed before, and adorned his own capital with forts, towers, palaces, and theaters; all of large dimensions and expensive material and finish, so that Jerusalem might well be compared to a queen seated upon her throne.

The city really did sit upon three mountains: Sion, Moria, and Akra; and from whatever side the traveler came he had to "go up to Jerusalem." The prospect from either of these three heights was very fine, for the delighted eye of the spectator might roam over nearly the whole extent of the Promised Land. On three sides of the city, the hills descended precipitately into three valleys; on the east, to the valley of Cedron; on the west, to that of Gihon; and on the south, to the barren vale of Gehenna, which was considered among the Jews as accursed, because in it their forefathers had once slain their children in sacrifice to the pagan deity Moloch. It was to this gloomy valley that Judas hastened after his betrayal of his blessed Master, to wander about for a time in an agony of remorse and finally to hang himself in despair. The vale of the brook Cedron, called also the valley of Josaphat, separated the mount on which the temple stood from the Mount of Olives. This last mount, with its gently rising terraces, its secluded caverns, its groves of olive trees, and its flowery meadows, was the favorite retreat of our blessed Saviour. Here, within its quiet recesses, whence He could easily discern the massive walls of the temple beyond, and the stately buildings of the city of His love, having at His feet the valley of Josaphat with its tombs of the ancient judges of Israel, of her kings, of Josaphat, of Absalom, and of the chief people of His race, all partially hidden in the groves of olive trees;

here Jesus loved to linger; here He passed the solemn hours of night in praying for the new Jerusalem and the miraculous new temple of the Lord, which He had come to build for all generations. It was from this Mount of Olives that He began, on the dreadful night of His agony and betrayal, His sad march across the soft-flowing Cedron, through the Ophla quarter of the city, up to the courts of Annas and Caiphas on Mount Sion.

In the time of Jesus, Jerusalem was divided into four parts, each surrounded with its own walls, towers, and moats, and protected by well-located fortifications. The traveler coming from the north advanced by a gently ascending road to what was called the new city, the least elevated part of the town, and inhabited chiefly by the working classes. At the time of our Saviour, this quarter of the city, together with the adjoining Mount Calvary, lay without the city proper, and was surrounded with walls only at a later period. Going in a southeasterly direction from this point, the traveler came upon the temple-mountain, or Mount Moria, in what was called the city of Solomon, where arose before him in majestic grandeur the temple of Jehova, surrounded by the habitations of the priests and Levites. On a still higher elevation stood the castle of Antonia, also built by Herod I, and near by was Pilate's Prætorium, or court of justice, with its marble halls and stately terraces, and within whose walls the Roman governors administered justice. On the southern slope of Mount Moria, toward the brook Cedron, lay the suburb of Ophla, occupied by the day-laborers and their families. On a hill toward the west, and separated from the temple-mountain by a deep gorge, rose the strong fortress of Akra, around whose base clustered a large population in the lower town.

On the south was what was called David's city, built upon Mount Sion, the highest point in all Jerusalem, and connected by a strong and massive bridge with the temple-mountain. This part, originally called Salem, was the oldest quarter of the city, and had been built by King Melchisedech. Here David, Solomon, and other kings of Juda, and in later days King Herod, had built strong forts and fine palaces, which were marvels of strength and beauty for those times and circumstances. Here David took up his first residence; here stood the noble palace in which Solomon displayed his grandeur; here towered aloft the royal castle of Herod, surrounded with its elegant gardens, fountains, and lakes; here stood the

house of the high-priest Caiphas; and here, too, was that privileged and ever memorable hall in which Jesus celebrated His last supper with His apostles, and instituted the ever blessed sacrament of the Eucharist. This quarter was the residence of the kings, high-priests, and principal citizens.

The sides of all the various hills were dotted with numerous habitations, mantled with charming gardens, and studded with lovely groves of the olive and fig tree. All about the city ran a moat 250 feet in width, and a wall of white marble 30 feet in height. Indeed, Jerusalem was the queen city of Israel, and not without cause did Jesus shed bitter tears as, standing upon Mount Olivet, He gazed in sadness on this large and splendid metropolis, with its glorious temples, its towers, spires, and palaces, and saw them with prophetic eye tottering to their very foundations. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, "if thou also had known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace" (*Luke xix*).

4. THE CHIEF-PRIESTS, THE SCRIBES, THE ELDERS, THE PHARISEES, THE SADDUCEES, THE HERODIANS, AND THE PUBLICANS

Let us now turn from the contemplation of the material city of Jerusalem, and take a view of its inhabitants. We find that during the lifetime of Christ, the most important class of persons, after the king and Roman governor,¹ were the high-priests. These had come down from the time of Moses in an unbroken line during 1,450 years, through the family of Levi, and had reached the fifty-second generation when Herod came to the throne. This prince assumed the undue prerogative of appointing to this office whomsoever he would, and of removing them according to his humor. The high-priests discharged the same duties in the temple, as in the days of Moses. They also presided over the chief council or Sanhedrim, the highest judicial court among the Jews, and in which sat, at the time of Christ, priests, Levites, scribes and pharisees, with Annas at their head. Besides the one high-priest, there were twenty-four chief-priests. These did not all dwell in Jerusalem, except during the specified week of service which, from time to time, they had to spend in the temple. The other priests, too, had the same duties to dis-

¹Six years after the birth of Christ, Archelaus, the son of Herod, was dethroned, and from that time the Romans appointed the rulers of Judea. Pontius Pilate was the sixth of these governors, A. D. 27 to 36. Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Cruel, was prince of Galilee.

charge which had been promulgated on Mount Sinai, namely, to conduct, with the assistance of the Levites, divine service on the Sabbath-day in the various synagogues throughout the land; and to read and explain the holy scriptures to the people. In the history of our divine Saviour, not only the high-priests and Levites appear and act, but also the scribes, elders, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. Let us take a glance at each of these classes of persons. The scribes were the teachers of law and religion, and explained the scriptures, which Esdras, after the Babylonian captivity, had gathered together in one collection. These scribes were held in high esteem among the people, who believed that they derived their learning in a continued stream from Moses himself, through Josue, Phineas, Heli, Samuel, David, the prophets, and Esdras. In former generations, there had indeed been many good, holy, and inspired men among the scribes, but at the time of Christ they had been corrupted by the Pharisees, were divided among themselves, and instead of searching and seeking for the truth of God's law, they busied themselves with useless and trifling technicalities, advanced frivolous fictions and worldly principles in place of the divine precepts; and thus merited the rebuke of our divine teacher and master.

By the elders, the holy scripture means the judges and other civil functionaries, selected from among the oldest and most experienced inhabitants of each section of the country. In every city there was established a court of these elders, with twenty-three officials in each court. It was to this "*council*" that our Saviour alluded when He said: "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca," that is, should curse his fellow-man, "shall be in danger of the council" (*Matt.* v. 22): meaning that the offender shall be brought before the council of the elders, and receive the penalty of his misdemeanor. These elders were first established by Josaphat, the fourth king of Juda, who warned them to act cautiously and justly, for they were to administer a law which came from God and not from men. Unhappily, most of the elders of Christ's time had forgotten this excellent advice of a pious king.

The class most injurious to the ordinary people were the Pharisees, who formed among themselves a sort of brotherhood composed of priests and laymen, and numbering at the time of Christ about 6,000 members. They fasted a good deal, prayed long prayers without moving eyes, arms, or hands, and gave tithes and alms, not as prescribed by the law, but

of the poorest quality of produce. Most of them practised these observances through hypocrisy, and to be seen by the people; for they proved by their pride and hard-heartedness that the sacred love of God and their neighbor had no place in their breasts. The simple and unsuspecting people respected them as holy men, and their word was often of more account than that of the high-priest. They knew how to take advantage of this respect on the part of the people, and lost no opportunity to mingle in the councils of the scribes and elders, to rule wherever they could, and to oppose violently all whose opinions did not agree with their own. Even the kings were sometimes made to fear their ill-will. Their pretended holiness was the deadly poison which infected the whole lower orders at the time of Christ. - Now, as there are few more heinous crimes than that of abusing God's holy law, and perverting it to our personal advancement before the world, Jesus often rebuked the Pharisees in the severest terms; and for this they bitterly detested Him and became His most persistent enemies.

Another sect living among the Jews were the Sadducees. These were mostly wealthy, prominent, and liberal free-thinkers, who denied the resurrection, the immortality of the soul, and the ministration of angels. Rejecting all oral tradition, they maintained, according to their own whimsical notions, that the only law binding them was the written law of Moses. Although they entertained bitter hostility of feeling toward the Pharisees, they made common cause with them against Jesus; for they, in their sensuality, expected a Messiah who would free them from the Roman yoke and bring them wealth and worldly success. They, in some respects, resembled the Herodians, a sect who pretended to believe that Herod was the Messiah, hung around the royal palace of this monarch, led a loose and abandoned life, and in speech and action differed but little from the heathens.

In the last place, let us cast a glance at the peculiar sect called Publicans, or tax-gatherers. These were Jews who had made a bargain with the Roman Government, and for a price had agreed to collect the taxes so offensive and so oppressive to their conquered fellow-countrymen. As it was their interest to collect as much as possible, they were looked upon as avaricious, called public sinners, or publicans, and were universally despised and hated; the more so, as the Jews bore the yoke of Roman authority with much ill-will.

Thus we see that at the time of the birth of Christ corruption had pervaded and demoralized all classes and conditions among the Jews, so that the few honest and well-intentioned people might well sigh heavily and groan impatiently for the coming of *Him* who had been foretold by the prophets.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

1. THE ROMAN EMPIRE. CÆSAR AUGUSTUS

AFTER this imperfect glance at the degradation of God's chosen people, the Jews, let us consider the still more dreadful degradation into which all the other nations of the earth had fallen, and especially the Roman people, who were the most powerful, most civilized, and most enlightened of them all. Countless nations had been reduced to subjection by their armies. All Italy, Switzerland, Germany as far as the Danube, Hungary, France, Spain, Northern Africa, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, and all the countries as far as the river Euphrates, bowed before the scepter of imperial Rome. In the midst of this immense empire rose the proud and haughty metropolis, Rome, the mistress of the universe. Founded about 753 years before Christ, this city was governed for some centuries by kings, who, in course of time, were expelled by the people, and their places supplied by a consul chosen every year. These consuls continued to govern the Romans till near the time of Christ, when Rome rose from a republic into an empire, and Julius Cæsar, who had been consul sixty years before Christ, and who afterward became a distinguished and successful general, was, on account of brilliant achievements in war, declared emperor for life, about forty-five years before the birth of the Saviour. In the following year, however, he was slain by Brutus, the Roman tribune, and succeeded by Octavianus. This last was so successful in all his undertakings, and raised the city of Rome to such a pinnacle of prosperity and splendor, that he was solemnly crowned by the senate with imperial honors, and proclaimed emperor under the name of Cæsar Augustus. Like Cæsar, Octavianus enjoyed absolute sway and unlimited power. He proclaimed a universal peace, ordered a general census of all his subjects, and under his reign Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour, was born at Bethlehem.

2. RELIGIOUS DEGRADATION. SUPERSTITION

At the time of his accession to power, the people of pagan Rome had sunk to the lowest depths of spiritual ignorance and superstition. With the exception of the Jewish people, not one of his subjects recognized the one true God who had made heaven and earth. On the contrary, even the Romans themselves, who had made such advances in power, luxury, and refinement, rendered divine honor to senseless creatures, to the stars in the firmament, to mortal men, to the irrational animals, and even to idols of lifeless wood and stone. Their public worship consisted in silly or lascivious songs, in wanton dances, in gluttony, drunkenness, and lust. The city of Rome was the center and stronghold of this many-headed demon of idolatrous wickedness. There stood the Pantheon, a temple sacred to "all the gods," containing 300 idols, of as many different nations, and each worshiped according to the rites of the people to whom it belonged. In fact, the system had become so extremely absurd, that the educated classes abandoned it and sank down into total unbelief in any deity whatever.

A people who had lost all confidence in their gods were soon oppressed with an indescribable and dismal feeling of terror, bordering on despair. They dreaded the unknown terrors and penalties of the life beyond the grave, and in their over-anxious efforts to penetrate the future, fell into the most gloomy superstition; for "where the gods do not rule, the evil spirits prevail," remarks a renowned writer. To stifle conscience and discover the hidden things of the future, men had recourse to the most absurd means, such as charms, spells, amulets, talismans, oracles, observations, the entrails of disinterred bodies of children which had been killed by starvation or strangulation, the flight of birds, and a thousand other senseless practices. Satan, of course, encouraged these villainous doings, until at last religious perversity, superstition, and unbelief culminated in devil-worship.

3. MORAL DEPRAVITY. LUST AND CRUELTY

As a necessary consequence of this absurd system of religion, the most shocking immorality followed. Deceit, falsehood, dishonesty, inhumanity, bribery, pride, debauchery, and every other vice reached its highest point, and more especially cruelty and lust. Fidelity in marriage was ridiculed in the

writings of the poets, hissed in the galleries of the theaters, and sneered at in the conversation of the people, while the opposing vice was commended and even consecrated by religion. The wife was a mere slave, and could for the most frivolous pretext be put away in disgrace by the brutal husband who desired to choose another woman for the gratification of his basest passions. Those unnatural vices, for the practice of which Sodom and Gomorrha were destroyed by fire from heaven, passed as matters of course and were perpetrated without a blush by philosophers and statesmen. Thousands of unfortunate young girls were trained up in public institutions for the vilest of lives, and there was even a temple where the young women of Rome offered themselves to the service of lust, and in which the most hideous and disgusting scenes were enacted under the name of religion.

Man, brought down to the level of the brute by such debasing practices, soon came to resemble the wild animals in his ferocious cruelty. This became apparent in the combats of the gladiators. These actors, who were either slaves, convicts, or professionals under pay, fought either with infuriated animals or with their fellow-men, till blood flowed in rivers over the sands of the arena. For days and nights in succession, large audiences of the degenerate Romans sat in the amphitheater and gazed with demoniacal rapture upon the horrible conflicts during which the victorious gladiators often waded knee-deep in the warm and reeking blood of their slaughtered opponents. Before entering upon these shocking combats, the gladiators presented themselves at the foot of the grand throne on which the emperor sat, and saluted him with the words: "*Te morituri salutamus*"¹ "On our way to death,

¹In what strong contrast to these heathen warriors did the soldiers of Christ stand forth in the same arena, when, just before dying for their faith, they raised their eyes to heaven and repeated the same salutation, not to an earthly king, but to the Lord of heaven and earth: "*Te morituri salutamus*."

"O Thou, the Martyrs' glorious King!
Of Confessors the crown and prize.
Who dost to joys celestial bring
Those who the joys of earth despise:
Te morituri salutamus.

"To God the Father glory be,
And to his sole-begotten Son,
The same, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
While everlasting ages run.
Te morituri salutamus."

we stop to greet thee." When one or more of these men were mortally wounded, and their blood ran in rivulets over the arena, the Roman ladies rose from their seats, clapped their hands, stamped their feet, and cried: "More blood! More blood!" and the combat had to be begun again.

4. THE EMPERORS

The chief leaders and most influential promoters of all these diabolical practices were the emperors themselves; the successors of the great Cæsar Augustus. Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero seemed to be actuated by the very demons of hell. They had no regard for the lives or property of their subjects, and when punishing with death those who opposed them, they seemed to find a hellish satisfaction in prolonging their death-agony as long as possible. Their greatest pleasure was to shed human blood, and one of them once exclaimed: "Would that the Roman people had but one head that I might strike it off at a single blow!" Trampling all morality and law under foot, they lived in the most horrible relations with their own sisters and dwelt in open adultery with some of the principal women in Rome. The nations whom they had subjugated were oppressed almost to starvation in order to supply the means of paying for the lavish prodigality of the court. Tiberius alone squandered more than one hundred millions of dollars on his table. We may gather some idea of the extravagance of these rulers, when we read that at one banquet 2,000 dishes of various kinds of fish and 7,000 dishes of the rarest birds were served, and on the table stood a vessel containing a preparation of the brains of peacocks and pheasants, mixed with the tongues of a thousand singing-birds. The choicest wines were quaffed from golden goblets, and the hall was strewn so profusely with rose-leaves that the drunken guest might drop from his couch of velvet to a bed of roses on the floor.

5. THE SLAVES

Side by side with this sinful and luxurious extravagance, behold a harrowing scene of abject poverty and degradation. Among the Romans, as among other pagan nations, it was held as a principle that of the two classes of men, one was born to freedom, the other to slavery and without rights of any kind. These unhappy creatures, some of whom were born in

slavery, others reduced to it by the chances of war, abounded in all the cities of the Roman Empire. The city of Athens in Greece contained 20,000 free citizens and 200,000 slaves. Rome, at the time of Cæsar Augustus, counted a population of a million and a half of inhabitants, one-half of whom were slaves, mostly in a very degraded and abject condition of life. We have to blush for our fellow-men, as we read of the treatment given to these unhappy creatures. For the most trifling offence, they were liable to be scourged, or even to be put to death. The first ladies of Rome used to stick sharp needles into the bodies of those unhappy creatures whose fate it was to serve them at their toilets, and who durst not relieve this torture even by a sigh. If, driven to wild desperation at his hopeless misery, an unhappy slave should slay his master, every slave in the household, however innocent, might be tortured to death; for slaves had no rights according to pagan law.

It is true that, amid this degradation, there existed at Rome a school of philosophers called Stoics, who prated much about virtue, morality, and the dignity of human nature; but what did their virtue amount to? To nothing more than a false, hypocritical, and much-affected superiority to pain or joy, fear or hope, hatred or love, and a proud and pretended indifference to adversity or prosperity, joined with the practice of several of the most repulsive and unnatural vices. Seneca supplies us with evidence at once true and shocking of the internal insufficiency of the Stoical virtue so called. He certainly preached very good and well-sounding theories, and in the manner of his death, which was by suicide, many affect to discover a proof of his indomitable courage and admirable force of character. But these admirers of the Stoics forget that this wise philosopher allowed to his disciple Nero every kind of extravagance and lust; that, in a letter written to the Roman Senate, he excused matricide; and that, finally, he offered to Nero the great amount of wealth which he had collected by extortions, if that emperor would pardon him and rescind the sentence of death hanging over him. This is a specimen of heathen magnanimity and virtue. The pagan historian Plutarch assures us that "in every family there were several instances of murdered children, mothers, and wives; fratricide was common, while it is a well-known truth that a king was believed to have the right to slay his own brothers in order to make his possession of the throne the more secure."

St. Jerome gives us an idea of the disregard prevalent among the pagan Romans for that corner-stone of the family, matrimonial fidelity, and of the ease with which husbands and wives separated, when he tells us of a Roman having buried his twenty-first wife, who herself had been the wife of twenty-one husbands.

Such was the state of society in the Roman Empire and among pagan nations generally. The night of crime and ignorance had settled in impenetrable gloom upon mankind. But glory, honor, and praise be to Our Saviour Jesus Christ, the first dawn of a new day, of a day of grace and mercy, is about to steal upon the benighted world; for "The fullness of time has come." "When the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son to re-establish all things in Christ" (*Gal. iv. 4* and *Eph. i. 1*).

CHAPTER III

THE FULLNESS OF TIME

DECISIVE and ever memorable hour in the history of man! The human race having now descended to the lowest depths of vice; evil having developed itself to the highest point, and the designs of heaven having been fully accomplished in regard to the Jews; mankind being in one case on the verge of destruction, and on the other, well prepared to receive a manifestation of the greatest of mysteries, relief could now be offered from heaven and be fully appreciated by man. Yes, human malice had come to a focus, and pagan man could not be worse. All the sacred bonds that tied him to his fellow-creature had been disregarded or torn asunder; every noble quality of the human heart, chaste love, compassion, respect for human nature, regard for right, for honesty, and justice, love of truth, detestation of vice, had been stifled in the breasts of the wicked. The fullness of time had come, relief must now be given, or else the human family will find a second deluge of its own making to engulf them. Every effort that could be made by man, when guided solely by a natural sense of right and wrong, had been tried to save society, and without success. The sword of the greatest conquerors, the debauched luxury of eastern lands, the learning of the Egyptians, the arts, sciences, and polite learning of the Greeks, the wisdom of Roman legislation; all had been tried, yet man grew more

and more debased. Now is the fullness of time; salvation must come, and must come from heaven alone.

The chosen people, the Jews, had finished their historical career. Clearer and more striking became the prophecies concerning the Messiah and His kingdom; His prototypes or figures had appeared and disappeared; the scepter had fallen from the hands of Juda; and those few persons among the Jews who were well disposed and knew enough to seek relief raised their longing eyes in tears to heaven, and cried out: "Drop down dew; ye heavens, let the clouds rain the Just One; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour." Now were the days accomplished; now must come the "Desired of Nations," the prophesied and prefigured Messiah, the true king from David's seed, Jesus Christ the Saviour, whose power and glory endure forever!

Even heathen nations were looking for a Saviour; for there had been preserved a tradition among them from the time of their progenitor Noe, regarding an early-promised and long-looked-for Messiah. The Jews who had come in contact with the Gentiles in Babylon, Assyria, Persia, and Egypt, had revived this tradition in the memories of these people, and by their holy scriptures had everywhere prepared them for the advent of the Prince of Peace. Even among the Romans a few sincere souls were found who fondly hoped for and ardently desired the arrival of Him who was to come from the East and bring to them new salvation and life in their demoralized condition. The days are now accomplished, the fullness of time has arrived; now at last must the true Son of God come down from heaven, and, as ruler of the elements, as Lord over life and death, as God of heaven, earth and hell, as God of charity and love for men, overturn the idols of paganism and destroy their temples.

And thou didst come, O adorable God of love, only-begotten Son of the eternal Father! Thou didst come down from Thy throne in heaven to dwell among us; to enlighten all, to heal all, to comfort all, to save all, who, in humility and confidence, hearken to Thy divine teachings. Already do we hear with joy and gladness the first notes of the angel-chorus floating through the midnight air of Christmas,

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!

GLORY BE TO GOD ON HIGH, AND ON EARTH PEACE TO MEN OF
GOOD WILL



Martin Feuerstein

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PART II

Immediate or Proximate Preparation for the Coming of the Redeemer.

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

1. THE MEANING OF THE EXPRESSION, THE SON OF GOD BECAME MAN

BEYOND and above all the names of God's elect stand the honored names of Mary and Joseph. We are about to enter upon the contemplation of the most wonderful and most glorious of mysteries, the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God. It is from the celestial glory of this mystery that the names Mary and Joseph derive exclusively their splendor. The honor and respect due them is founded on the truth of their having been the highly privileged instruments selected by God to have a share in the human part of this mystery: Mary as the true and real mother of the Man-God; Joseph as the chaste spouse of this highly favored mother and as foster-father of the divine Infant.

Our holy mother, the Church, does right and well when she bids us bend the knee in reverence each time that in the Holy Mass we hear pronounced in accents of faith, "*Et homo factus est*:"—"He was made man." Yes, "*The word was made flesh*"—" *Verbum caro factum est*"—we hear, we repeat the words of St. John in his gospel: and priest and people together, with believing minds and grateful hearts, bow prostrate to the earth. We are eager to proclaim how utterly unfit we are to meditate worthily upon this awful mystery, how utterly unable to fathom its depth. If asked in what does this august incarnation of the Son of God consist, we must confess and hold firmly that it is a solemn mystery of our faith. The groping intellect of the impious man pretends

to find nothing in it but distracting riddles and absurd contradictions. Only the confiding and believing mind of him who, with childlike and prayerful sentiments, asks the question, can comprehend the answer. How can the incredulous man who is prone to calculate everything by petty weight and measure, or by line and angle, who will admit no truth whose reasons do not appear plain and conclusive to his shallow brain, and who thinks that in the deceptive lines of geology or in the unsettled axioms of physics, he has all the law and power of God confined—how will such a man comprehend, when he is told that the infinite, uncreated, eternal Son of the heavenly Father assumed the finite, time-created human nature, and assumed it from the pure womb of the Virgin Mary, through the operation of the Holy Ghost; that both natures, the divine and the human, are inseparably united in the one person of this God-Man, Christ, by what is called the hypostatic union; and that this union involves no mingling of the natures, or no loss to either nature, but that in their union they constitute one person; and that all this was done that all men may, by their co-operation with Christ, be made children of God and heirs to heaven? How can a contracted and clouded human intellect understand this profound mystery? And yet this is the foundation of Christianity. But faith is especially a divine grace, the free gift of heaven to man. Let us therefore, Christian reader, with the assistance of this grace, with loving hearts and humble intellects, go forward with reverent steps to the study and contemplation of the incarnation.

2. THE TRUE AND REAL DIVINITY OF THE REDEEMER

The first question, and a most important one, is: Who is this Jesus Christ who became man for the salvation of the world?

Listen to the answer given by the holy evangelist John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men: And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. That was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world and the world was made

by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them the power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name. And the *Word was made flesh* and dwelt among us." In these sublime words, the evangelist describes Him who was to take His human nature from the Blessed Virgin: the eternal Word, that is, the knowledge, or wisdom of the heavenly Father: that cognition which is from all eternity, and which is not the Father, but which is in Him, and with Him, and of Him from all eternity; which subsists in the most perfect communion of being with Him, and through whom the eternal Father Himself has created all existing things. Who else could this be but the only begotten, consubstantial Son of God? This Son of God is not merely a personal living being, but He has life and the source of being in Himself. He is life and wisdom itself, and therefore from Him flow all the high spiritual life, and all the light of true and sacred knowledge among Jews and Gentiles.

For, although man had separated himself from God by sin, a Redeemer was promised from the beginning, and man was prepared for this redemption through the revelation of divine knowledge and holiness by the instrumentality of the patriarchs, prophets, and other God-illuminated men. Yet this dwelling and acting of divine knowledge among men during the years of preparation was not personal or visible. But now, at last, in the fullness of time, a visible and bodily dwelling was to take place, and to this extent, namely, that just this divine cognition, this eternal Word, this Son of God assumed human nature, and, as the holy evangelist tells us in the important proposition: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

St. John could not more clearly and more emphatically affirm and express that he who in the fullness of time assumed human nature for our salvation is truly the Son of the living God.

And did not Jesus in the most indubitable manner, declare Himself to be the Son of God? To Nicodemus He said: "God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (*John* iii.). He asserts the same before all the people, when He says: "I and the Father are one" (*John* x. 30). Christ expressed His divinity so clearly in these words,

that the Jews sought to stone Him, because He made Himself God. This oft-repeated assertion of His divine nature He confirmed solemnly and publicly in presence of the high-priest. When Caiphas inquired: "Art thou Christ, the Son of the living God?" Jesus replied: "I am."

Moreover, undeniable history assures us that this Christ confirmed this testimony by the most incontestable proofs, namely, by the most stupendous miracles wrought in presence of multitudes of people. Who stilled the storm at sea? Who healed the lame and sick, gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, and, by a word, raised the dead to life? How could the testimony of such a miracle-worker be doubted?

Hence, the apostles, who were witnesses as well of the testimony as of the miracles of Jesus Christ, believed firmly in the divinity of their Master, and even sealed their faith with their blood. The words pronounced before our Lord by Peter: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," he afterward preached in public before the multitude, accusing them of having crucified and slain the author of life. In the beginning of his second epistle, he calls Him, "Our *God* and Saviour, Jesus Christ." St. Paul calls Jesus Christ, "The only Son of God, in whom and by whom all things have been created, and in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporeally."

This faith of the two chief apostles became, and remained ever afterward the faith of the whole Christian church. And if, now and again, in the course of centuries, unhappy men arose and in their pride of intellect, denied the august divinity of our blessed Redeemer, and gave great scandal thereby, let us remember the words of Christ: "It is impossible that scandals should not come, but woe to him through whom they come."

3. THE TRUE AND REAL HUMANITY OF THE REDEEMER

Important as it certainly is, that we should have a firm faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, who became man for us, it is equally important that we should believe firmly in His humanity. We should never forget that the Son of God assumed not a mere imaginary body, but a real and true human body and human soul (which dogma the Apollinarists denied), and united this body and soul inseparably to His divine nature. "It is erroneous," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "to acknowledge and adore Christ as mere man, as it is also to

recognize Him as God alone, without humanity. If Christ is simply God without humanity, we have not been redeemed. Let man adore Him as God, believing Him to be also man. For it is useless and wrong to recognize Him as man to the exclusion of the Godhead.¹

Thus we recognize in Christ both the Son of God and the Son of Man, believing that He assumed human nature and became like one of ourselves in all respects, sin alone excepted. We hold that He assumed a real, earthly, human body, in which He experienced hunger, thirst, and necessity of sleep, just like other men. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (*Eph.* v. 30), says St. Paul. We hold that He took to Himself a human soul, in which He felt the sentiments of joy and sadness, of longing desire, of just indignation, precisely as other mortals; a soul which was grieved at the tomb of Lazarus, and sorrowful unto death in Gethsemane; a soul at once subject to surprise and wonder, and meek, humble, and obedient unto the death of the cross.

CHAPTER II

THE ANGEL'S GREETING TO MARY

1. THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

HEAVEN'S preparation of Mary was now complete. She shone in transcendent beauty, like a very garden of paradise prepared by the Most High for the second Adam, Jesus Christ. She was laden with all the supernatural wealth befitting the throne on which the Son of God would sit enthroned during the very first months of His human existence. She was finished according to the will of God, as the ark into which the restorer of the human family, the second Noe, might enter with safety and security, from the sin which deluged the rest of the human race; she was built up in beauty and glory, as the temple in which the greatest of mysteries should transpire, in which heaven and earth should kiss

¹For, if Christ were not true man, He would not be our brother by nature, and hence could not become our true representative or substitute in the atonement to God's justice. If he were not true man, He could not really suffer or die, and hence could not be our Redeemer.

the kiss of peace, and the grand work of our redemption and reconciliation should be perfected.

At this time, the Blessed Virgin might be in her sixteenth year. One day she was kneeling at home in Nazareth, absorbed in prayer and meditation, and glowing with the desire to witness the coming of the Redeemer of the world. Suddenly her quiet room was flooded with a brilliancy of heavenly light. The moment marked from all eternity had now arrived, the heavens opened, and the wonder of wonders took place as described by St. Luke, the evangelist. "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in said unto her: *Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women!* Who, having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God: Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of David, His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end.* And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* And behold! thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren; because no word shall be impossible with God" (*Luke i.*).

This extraordinary and majestic messenger is an angel. For, as a fallen angel seduced our first mother Eve to destruction, so it is becoming that a faithful angel should introduce and prepare the way for our salvation with the second sinless Eve. Yes, it is an angel; for, as it had pleased kind Providence to announce the old promises of the Messiah through eminent men, patriarchs and prophets, so was it proper that the last of these promises, and with it the winding up of the Old Testament, should be entrusted to an angel. It is an angel; for, as St. Paul teaches, angels are sent to those who

are to be saved, who are to merit happiness. It is an angel; for the angels from the beginning desired the coming of a Saviour, by whom the fall of their brethren would be compensated, and their places be filled with the redeemed souls of men. The archangel Gabriel, whose name implies "power of God," was the chosen ambassador, for it was eminently proper that the most distinguished member of the heavenly court should convey the all-important message to the first among the daughters of men. It was Gabriel; he who six months previous had proclaimed the birth of Christ's fore-runner, St. John, was now to announce the approach of Christ Himself. It was Gabriel; for he had, five hundred years before, foretold to the prophet Daniel the future day of salvation, the great and glorious day; and now it was meet that the same Gabriel should declare the fulfilment of his promise and usher in the dawn of this momentous day.

Observe here, that it is one of the foremost of heaven's princes who hastens with joy to Mary, and although she is but a simple maiden of earth, pays to her respectful homage and praise. How can it be reckoned a sin for us, then, as heretics would have it, if, casting ourselves in spirit before that exalted throne of glory on which she now sits in dignity and splendor, we bring to her the tribute of praise and veneration?

2. "HAIL"

"*Ave Maria!*" "Hail Mary!" Ancient writers inform us that the word *Ave* or *Hail*, was the morning salutation of the olden time, and signifies, "Rejoice, mayst thou be well and happy." *Ave* is the inversion of the name *Eva*, which means "mother of all persons." The first *Eva* proved undeserving of this title, inasmuch as by her disobedience she precipitated death upon her children. Our second mother, Mary, is the mother of true and genuine life, for she brought forth Him who says truly, "*I am the life.*"

Hail! How full of comfort is this ancient morning-greeting of the East, as it falls upon the startled ear of millions, after a long night of sin, and proclaims the dawn of the brightest day yet seen by mortal eyes. *Ave* issues from Gabriel's lips, and immediately all the angels of heaven take up the greeting, and the celestial vaults resound with the angelic voices, joyfully singing: *Ave, ave, Maria!* Hail, Mary, hail!

3. "FULL OF GRACE"

Gratia plena—full of grace. We read in sacred history that many servants of God were full of grace. But how much more abundant was Mary's fullness of grace than that of all the saints of God united! The stars in the firmament are full of light, and yet what is all their light combined, in comparison with the light of the full moon when she sails majestically in all her fullness through the solemn hours of night? Mary, like this bright orb of night, surpasses all grace-favored souls in the fullness of grace from heaven. The plenitude of heaven's pleasure, gladness, and blessings dwells within her stainless soul.

4. "THE LORD IS WITH THEE, BLESSED ART THOU"

Dominus tecum—the Lord is with thee—*benedicta tu in mulieribus*—blessed art thou among women. Here the Christian reader may ask: Did not the Lord say to Josue, "Behold, as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee;" and to Gideon, "The Lord is with thee, thou bravest among men;" and to Jeremias, "I am with thee;" and to Paul, "Fear not, for I am with thee." How and in what special manner is the Lord with Mary?

We answer, He is with Mary in the fullest, truest, and most intimate relationship that we can conceive. Not simply as with other creatures, by virtue of His omnipresence and omnipotence, not merely by virtue of His actual grace as with all men and even sinners, not merely by virtue of His sanctifying grace as He is with all the pious and just, not merely by His special assistance as He is with His chosen, heroic confessors and martyrs, male and female. Not simply to this extent only is the Lord with Mary, but by virtue of the eternally decreed embodiment of His divine Son in her virginal womb, in which embodiment this same Son of God was pleased to take from the substance of Mary, the flesh which was crucified for us on the cross and the blood which He shed for us, and which has been adored by Christians in all ages as the ransom price for the sins of the world.

Benedicta tu in mulieribus—blessed art thou among women. Yes, bring forth from antiquity all the noblest matrons and maidens, from Eve to Mary: the illustrious Sara, the careful and prudent Rebecca, the beautiful Rachel, the obedient daughter of Jephtha, Anna, the holy mother of

prophets, the wise Abigail, the gentle Noemi, the faithful Ruth, the heroic Deborah, the brave Judith, the imploring Esther, the chaste Susannah; bring forth in beauteous array the renowned heroines of Christianity down to the present day—and imagine the long line of pure and saintly women who live in the Church till the end of time—what a magnificent galaxy! But among them one exceeds in all things, Mary, the majestic queen of her race.

And why is Mary the most blessed among women? Because it was her peculiar privilege to unite within herself all the circumstances of life peculiar to her sex: the immaculate purity and innocence of a virgin, the fidelity of a wife, the dignity of a mother, and the freedom of soul of a widow. Because she alone of all creatures was spared and preserved from the curse uttered by God upon our disobedient mother Eve, and all her descendants. Mary was never subjected to the dominion of the flesh, never subjected to the desire of man; she did not sacrifice her virginity, and yet attained to the dignity of mother; without a blemish of sin she conceived her divine Child, and without pain gave Him birth. During her whole life we find no trace of weakness, no neglect of duty, no indifference. She alone stood exempt from the universal blight.

5. THE ANGEL'S PROMISE

Let us now examine, with pious attention, the burden of his message. What did the angel declare? Nothing less than the re-establishment of peace between God and man, the overthrow of death, and the restoration of life. He who, with power and glory, was to effect all this, was Mary's Son—God's Son, too, for "He shall be called the Son of the Most High," and yet be the Son of man at the same time, for "God will give unto Him the throne of David His father;" thus He was God and man. He will come first of all to the lost sheep of Israel, but His dominion will extend over the whole earth. Now shall be fulfilled the words of promise spoken by the Son of God through the mouth of the prophet a thousand years before. "As king I have been placed over Sion. The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day," that is, from all eternity, "have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me," in thy holy humanity, "and I will give to Thee the nations for Thy inheritance, and for Thy possession the bounds of the earth."

Now our Lord brings about all that He had promised to King David, and spoken by the tongues of the prophets. The throne of David rises from its ruins, but not as a throne of earthly glory and majesty, not as a throne around which only one nation, one mighty Jewish kingdom is to be established, but as a much higher throne whose grandeur is to be spiritual and supernatural, a throne around which all peoples and nations shall be gathered together. A descendant of the family of David shall sit upon this throne and be a king, but not a king whose power shall depend on human sagacity, wealth, or the sword; but a king whose might shall be built upon truth, love, and sacrifice. And this king, sprung from the family of David, shall reign in the house of Jacob forever.

Most of the Jews expected an earthly king who would liberate them from the hated yoke of Roman oppression, and establish a powerful Hebrew kingdom, as in the time of David. But God's government proceeds by a gradual development. He has appointed a certain fixed and noble destiny for all men, and to this goal shall they come, slowly but surely, during the lapse of many centuries, and often over roads and by means which, to our limited and cloudy vision, seem entirely too tedious and altogether inadequate. Better and more suitable things shall transpire. God is the creator and founder not of one nation only, but of all mankind. The boundaries of states must be wiped out, the exclusiveness of certain peoples must be broken through, and all nations must be gathered into one large family, in order to form the one kingdom of God: the king who shall sit enthroned and govern this kingdom is Christ Jesus, the Man-God.

6. THE MIRACULOUS FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE

Such was the economy of God at this juncture. Who would have believed that a poor maiden, and one who had made a vow of perpetual virginity, would be chosen as a suitable instrument in the Incarnation of the Son of God. And yet she was chosen by God for this grand purpose, in order that the old prophecies concerning a virgin-mother might be verified, and the splendor of His almighty power be made manifest to men.

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son

of God'' (*Luke i. 3*). Sublime mystery! in whose presence proud reason rebels and recoils, before which divine faith bows down in humble admiration. The virgin remains untouched and unblemished; by the power of immediate interposition of the all-high God, and without human interference, she is raised to the dignity of mother. From her chaste maternal womb, the Son of God takes His flesh and blood, though the mode in which this human body is formed from the person of the immaculate maiden by the operation of the Spirit-Creator, is a profound and solemn mystery. Hence St. Bernard aptly says: "The archangel Gabriel uses the word *overshadow* very appropriately, to signify that the heavenly Father wished the process and manner of the Incarnation of His only-begotten Son to remain a hidden and impenetrable mystery."

CHAPTER III

MARY'S ANSWER

1. MARY ALARMED AT THE ANGEL'S PROMISE

MARY "having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought what manner of salutation this might be?" The evangelist says emphatically that it was the message which troubled her, and not the appearance of the angel under the form of a man. We know from scriptural and other sources that heavenly spirits often appeared to the saints, bringing them instruction and consolation from heaven. Hence we may well believe that the highly privileged queen of saints and angels must have been made familiar with visits from angels, from her very infancy. What aroused her fears were the words, and not the apparition of the angel, although they were words of respectful homage and praise. How could Mary, who, in her excessive humility, believed herself to be the lowest and most insignificant creature living, how could she deserve such lavish praise? Was there no flattery lurking in the words of the angel? She knew flattery to be a most treacherous snare for virtue, and that even the spirit of hell sometimes disguises himself as an angel of light, in order to

deceive and seduce us. Was not our mother Eve deceived by the flattery of this demon, when he whispered into her ear: "You shall become gods?" Hence the second Eve, our cautious and prudent second mother, Mary, was troubled; and only after a full assurance from the angel that it was not on account of her own merits, but by the favor and grace of God, that she had won this homage, did she become calm, and consent to listen to his message.

2. "HOW SHALL THIS COME TO PASS"

"How shall this be done, because I know not man?" inquired Mary, after the angel had promised her motherhood, and finished his message. These are the first words of the Blessed Virgin that the evangelists have given us, and they are words worthy of God's mother. Delicate purity, lofty faith, heroic strength of character, stand out boldly in these words.

3. "BEHOLD THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD: BE IT DONE UNTO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD"

When Gabriel had given to Mary the solution of her difficulty, and had explained to her the process by which this sublime mystery was to be effected without a blemish upon her virginity, that ever memorable, thrice precious fiat fell from her lips, *be it done!* "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word!" By an angel she is saluted as mother of the Most High, but, in profound conviction of her unworthiness, she styles herself the handmaid of the Lord.

Fiat: be it done to me according to thy word. Grand and momentous word, *fiat!* How similar in power and effectiveness to that almighty fiat uttered at the beginning of time when the Creator said: "*Fiat lux!*"—let there be light! And as at that time the germs of creation, still buried in the darkness of chaos, longed for the almighty *fiat* which would set them free and bring them forth to a glorious existence in the light of heaven, so too did the fallen Adam, with his descendants in limbo, long for the *fiat* of Mary; so longed the patriarchs and prophets, Abraham, David, and all the just souls for the virgin's *fiat*. At the very moment when Mary signified her assent by pronouncing the *fiat*, be it done, the Incarnation of the Son of God began. The Son of the eternal Father

came down from His throne of glory¹ and entered the womb of the ever blessed Virgin Mary; whilst at the same instant, from the heart of God, a torrent of dazzling glory enveloped the virgin, who was now becoming the mother of God, and the Holy Ghost effected the grand and sublime mystery of a God made man. At once throughout the vaults of heaven resounded the joyous voices of angels singing: "The Word was made flesh, and we saw His glory, the glory, as it were, of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (*John i. 14*).

CHAPTER IV

MARY'S VISIT TO ELIZABETH

1. THE ARCHANGEL FORETELLS THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

WE HAVE made brief allusion in a preceding chapter to a very important event which took place about six months previous to the actual Incarnation of Jesus Christ: namely, the announcement by an angel of the birth of the forerunner of Christ, St. John the Baptist. The evangelist, St. Luke, thus relates this wonderful event:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zachary of the course of Abia, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame. And they had no son, for that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were well advanced in years. And it came to pass when he executed the priestly function in the order of his course before God, according to the custom of his priestly office, it was his lot to offer incense, going into the temple of the

¹The coming down to earth of the Son of God must not be understood to mean that He left heaven and ceased to reign as God in the glory of His Father. As our thoughts, when expressed in words, find their way into the hearts of hearers and readers, do not therefore cease to remain in our own mind, so the eternal Word, the Son of God, was not prevented by his Incarnation from filling heaven with His divine omnipresence.

Lord: and all the multitude of the people was praying without at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zachary seeing him was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him: Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord: and shall drink no wine or strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people. And Zachary said to the angel: Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years. And the angel, answering, said to him: I am Gabriel who stand before God, and am sent to speak to thee and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time. And the people was waiting for Zachary: and they wondered that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak to them, and they understood that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he made signs to them and remained dumb. And it came to pass, after the days of his office were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days Elizabeth his wife conceived, and hid herself five months, saying: Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He hath had regard to take away my reproach among men" (*Luke i.*).

Though of noble and distinguished extraction, this holy couple, Zachary and Elizabeth, led a very simple and retired, God-pleasing life in a mountain-town in the hilly part of Judea. Only seldom, and when the priestly office required, Zachary emerged from his retirement to go to Jerusalem for the performance of his sacerdotal duties.

It was during one of these visits, whilst in the act of offering incense on the golden steps near the altar of incense, that the unexpected and miraculous tidings were brought to Zachary by the angel Gabriel. Observe here the marked difference

between Zachary and Mary. To both the angel makes wonderful and unintelligible declarations. Mary believes at once, and asks for the solution of only one difficulty, that is, how her vow of perpetual virginity is to be reconciled with the promised dignity of motherhood. Zachary doubts, and asks for a sign in proof of the angel's assertion. And, as a penalty for his hesitancy in believing and his unwillingness to turn his ear unconditionally to the divine promise, he is deprived of the faculty of hearing,¹ and the tongue which gave expression to the doubt is temporarily paralyzed. Moses once, in a similar manner, doubted the word of God, and, in punishment therefor, was excluded from the Promised Land. Thus does a loving, yet just God, resent the slightest want of faith in his chosen servants.

Such chastisement does not, however, exclude the friendship and grace of God. At the very moment of his punishment, Zachary receives the pleasant and unexpected promise that a son shall be born to him, and that this son shall be called John, that is, "the son of grace, or gift of mercy." This John will be great before the Lord, great by special sanctification in his mother's womb, great in his humility and penance, great in his virginal purity, great in his preaching as the forerunner of Christ, great in his prophecies, and great, finally, in his martyr-death. He will be like to the great prophet Elias; like to him in his austere life in the desert, in his poverty and contempt for the world, in his fortitude, in his indifference to death, and in his burning zeal; so that Christ Himself called him a burning and a shining light, as Sirach says of Elias: "He stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch" (*Eccles.* xlviii).

What a welcome message for the devout Elizabeth! Hardly had she heard the wonderful assurance of the final granting of her ardent prayers for years past, than she withdrew from her friends and neighbors, not indeed because ashamed of becoming a mother in her old age, but rather to thank God in solitude for having been pleased to relieve her of what was considered a disgrace among the Jews, namely, her life-long barrenness; as well, also, to sanctify by prayer and meditation herself and her child.

¹From the fact stated in the Bible, that the neighbors and kinsfolk held intercourse with Zachary by signs, it is inferred that besides losing his power of speech, he was also temporarily deaf.

2. MARY'S VISIT TO ELIZABETH. THE MAGNIFICAT

But the Spirit of God, while thus leading the pious mother Elizabeth up the heights of piety and perfection, had another mysterious object in view. After Mary, she was to be the very first among all the children of men upon earth, to know of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and to salute the Redeemer of the world even before His birth. In preparation for this high and holy privilege, Elizabeth was required by God to spend five months in holy retreat.

At last, in the sixth month, the ineffable favor was to be granted to her. "And Mary rising up in those days,¹ went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judea. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth" (*Luke i. 39*).

Unable to speak from excessive joy, they embraced each other in silence. But when Mary opened her lips to pronounce words of greeting, a flood of light from heaven inundated the soul of Elizabeth, and her human love was suddenly transformed into profound and sacred reverence for her youthful cousin. "And it came to pass," says St. Luke, "that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord" (*Luke i.*).

Now is accomplished all that had been promised to Zachary, the gray-haired priest, in the temple, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from His mother's womb." At this moment St. John was cleansed from the stain of original sin, and his soul was clothed with the white robe of sanctifying grace. He felt the nearness of that beloved friend whose way upon earth he himself, in due time, was to prepare. At the same instant, too, the torrent of divine grace which had purified the child, inundated the soul of his mother, and she saw the grand mystery of the gospel, the redemption of the

¹About the end of March or beginning of April, some days after the angel had announced to Mary her selection to be the mother of Christ.

human race, and recognized in Mary the mother of the Son of God. Whence this superabundance of grace? From Jesus, certainly. And what channel of communication did he employ? The evangelist tells us in these words: "When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary." Thus our beloved mother was the channel of the first saving grace. Our Saviour employed her blessed feet to carry Him in search of the first child of grace. He employed her virgin lips, her gentle words of salutation, in order to fill Elizabeth with the light of His divine spirit. And such is the proud function of Mary from the first hour of the work of redemption to the end of time: dispenser of Heaven's graces.

Observe one thing more. "And Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." This simultaneous praising of Mary and adoration of Christ, this union of homage, comes from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost himself. And why did Elizabeth give expression to this combined homage with a loud voice? That its echoes might resound from the tongues of the redeemed through all ages.

Elizabeth's words of praise have been said. Now the mother of God opens her mouth and gives utterance to that sublime canticle of gladness and praise which the church has sung with rapturous joy for eighteen hundred years, and will sing to the end of the world, our grand *Magnificat*.

"*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*—my soul doth magnify the Lord." For all the honors conferred upon me and all the graces inundating my soul, are not my work, but the work of an all-gracious Lord.

"And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." As the infant leaped for joy in its mother's womb, so I rejoice in God my Saviour. For in Him alone, and not in the wealth, pleasures, and honors of the world, are true joy and happiness of the soul. The pleasures of the flesh lead to destruction, and perish with the flesh. Far be it from me, then, to rejoice in aught else, or to pride in aught else, but in God my Saviour.

"For He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid." Because I, a creature of His hands, acknowledged my frailty, He hath chosen me for a vessel of grace. Poor Eve! why didst thou forget thy origin, and wish in the pride of thy heart to be like to God, and thus become a vessel of ruin for

all? "He has set me up for a blessing to all, and behold from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed." A prince from the heavenly court intoned the chant of praise, Elizabeth took up the strain, and the distinctive mark of all those who shall serve my Son during future time, will be to call me blessed; not on my own account, but for His sake who hath filled me with grace and benediction.

"Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name." He hath sanctified me from the beginning of time, and with the beauty of virginity joined the dignity of motherhood. He hath raised me above angels and archangels, above cherubim and seraphim, by giving Him to be my own true child, before whom heaven and earth fall prostrate in adoration. He hath wrought greater things in me than in any other creature, but yet not for my sake alone, for His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. I see in spirit how the children of men shall come from the north and the south, from the rising and from the setting of the sun, to worship Him who dwelleth near my heart. I perceive the light of truth going forth from Him; that light illuminating their darkness of spirit, that comfort which cheers their hearts, that vigor which strengthens them to justice, and that life which vitalizes them for immortality. I see the dawning of the new and grace-abounding day; I perceive the miracles of mercy which shall be effected in myriads of bleeding hearts; and yet, too, I see the just chastisements that are to fall upon those who in pride of heart shall dare to oppose the kingdom of the Son of Man.

"He hath showed might in his arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away." He will cast down the idols from their thrones, He will break the force of the sword, He will humble the proud and the worldly-wise, and those who pride in their riches He will put to shame. He will call the poor and the simple to preach His word, He will raise up oppressed woman from her degradation, He will break the chains of the slave. I see the tree of life raising its lofty head and spreading its fair branches in the midst of His kingdom; and on its fruit, the mystic bread, all those who labor and are weary shall feast and be refreshed.

"He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of

His mercy. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." He will wash away the stains from Israel, and segregate the innocent and believing of His people. To these He will give power to found a new and glorious Israel which shall reach to the ends of the earth; a kingdom of grace and truth, so that from Israel shall come the salvation of all nations, and the old promise shall be triumphantly fulfilled.

Thus sang the bride of heaven, and with rapture and reverence did Elizabeth listen to the words of her canticle. How happy, too, she must have been during the three months' visit of our blessed Lady! For exactly the same length of time did the ark of the covenant repose in the house of Obededom the Gethite, and Obededom and his family were blessed through the presence of the ark. What multiplied blessings must the real ark of the covenant have shed within the walls of Zachary's house, upon the devout family, and especially upon the future forerunner of our blessed Lord! For, if at the first salutation of Mary, the unborn Baptist leaped for joy and was sanctified, and His mother filled with the Holy Ghost, what marvels of grace must have taken place during the three months which Mary passed with this thrice-privileged family!

3. THE BIRTH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

When Mary had, for the space of three months, discharged to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, her duty of love and respect, the time arrived for her to return home to her devout spouse, St. Joseph. For Elizabeth, the time described by St. Luke had come. "Now Elizabeth's full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and kinsmen heard that the Lord had showed His great mercy toward her, and they congratulated with her. And it came to pass on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they called him by His father's name Zachary. And his mother, answering, said: Not so, but he shall be called John. And they said to her: There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father how he would have him called. And demanding a writing-tablet he wrote, saying: John is his name. And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came upon all their neighbors: and all these things were noised abroad over all the hill-country of Judea: And all they that had heard them

laid them up in their heart, saying: What a one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.

“And Zachary, his father, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and he prophesied, saying: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people. And He hath raised up a horn of salvation to us, in the house of David His servant. As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who are from the beginning: Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us: To perform mercy to our fathers, and to remember His holy testament. The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, that He would grant to us: That being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve Him without fear. In holiness and justice before him, all our days. And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways. To give knowledge of salvation to His people, unto the remission of their sins. Through the bowels of the mercy of our God; in which the Orient from on high hath visited us. To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct our feet into the ways of peace.”

By such wonderful events and admirable prophecies, was our heavenly Father pleased to signalize the birth of Him whom He had marked out as His divine Son's precursor, St. John the Baptist.

PART III

Birth, Infancy, and Youth of Jesus Christ

CHAPTER I

THE JOURNEY OF MARY AND JOSEPH TO BETHLEHEM

1. BETHLEHEM

VISIONS of the past must inevitably arise before the mind of the pilgrim when, leaving Jerusalem and traveling toward the south a distance of six or seven miles, he sees before him the remains of a renowned and holy city—that chosen city of grace where the great mystery of the Incarnation was made manifest in the birth of Christ—the ancient and royal mountain-city of Bethlehem.

This favored town sat upon a hill, whose gentle slopes were mantled with stately groves of olive and fig trees, while rich and fertile meadow-lands stretched far away into the lovely valley below. To the pilgrim coming from Jerusalem its appearance was very impressive; while the prospect, as seen from its own battlements, was indescribably beautiful and varied. Looking toward the north, the spectator saw beneath him the valley of Terebinth where David slew Goliath; toward the east might be descried the waters of the Dead Sea solemnly suggestive of God's punishments; away to the south lay the famous town and country of Hebron, the home of Zachary and Elizabeth and birth-place of St. John the Baptist; and toward the west the eye swept over the fountains and gardens of Solomon, till it rested on a chain of mountains whose base was washed by the waters of the Mediterranean.

This charmingly situated city of the ancient kings was sacred in the eyes of the Jews by reason both of its grand historical associations and of the glorious prophecy which had been foretold concerning it. It was on the plains of Bethlehem that Rachel, the wife of the Patriarch Jacob, had

brought forth her second son, whom she called Benoni, or child of sorrows, but whom his father named Benjamin, or son of his right hand—a figure of Christ, who, in His humiliations, was a veritable Benoni, a man of sorrow, but in His triumph became the true Benjamin, enthroned forever at the right hand of the eternal Father.

It was on the plains of Bethlehem that this same Rachel, Mary's beauteous prototype, died in the pangs of childbirth and was buried.¹ And here, even at this day, is her grave still visited by Christians, Jews, and Turks.

It was on the plains of Bethlehem that Ruth, the gentle gleaner, exercised her filial love toward her mother-in-law, Noemi, and thus deserved to be one of those from whom Christ sprang in the flesh.

On Bethlehem's plains, David, in his youth, tended his father's flocks. Bethlehem being his birth-place, was called the city of David. Its original name, however, was Ephrata, or fruitful, and it was subsequently known as Bethlehem, or city of bread.

It was concerning this renowned city that, more than 700 years before Christ, the following prophecy was pronounced: "And thou, Bethlehem-Ephrata, art a little one among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel; and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity" (*Micheas* v. 2; *Matt.* ii. 6). In Bethlehem, therefore, the birth-place of the David of the old law, was the David of the new law, the King of kings, Christ Jesus, to be born: for it had been so ordained by divine Wisdom from all eternity.

2. OCCASION OF THE JOURNEY

But how was this decree of God to be accomplished? For the virgin chosen to be the mother of the world's Redeemer dwelt with her spouse at a distance of at least four days' journey from Bethlehem. But God so ordered things that the

¹A pious pilgrim of our own time thus describes this grave: "This spot is certainly one of the most remarkable in the world. A woman, dying on her journey, is buried in this spot more than three thousand five hundred years ago, and her grave is still preserved, revered, and visited by the followers of three religions. This cannot be the result of chance or accident. There must be some better or symbolical reason why God has thus ordained. Probably because Rachel, by having been the mother of the Egyptian Joseph, was the type or figure of Mary the mother of Jesus."—*Besuch bei Sem, Cham, und Japhet, von Alban Stolz.*

Roman emperor, Cæsar Augustus, became an instrument in the divine hands to carry out the ancient prophecy. "And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city" (*Luke ii. 1*). By this universal census, this haughty pagan ruler wished to add glory to his crown, and to ascertain officially who and how many were his taxable subjects. From the fact that the governor of Judea was compelled to prepare for this enrollment by ordering the Jews to repair at once to their respective family-towns, the most incredulous among them must have become convinced that now, at last, every vestige of their ancient independence had vanished; that the scepter had indeed fallen from the royal hand of Juda, that the fullness of time had come, and that the Redeemer must at once appear upon the earth.

When St. Joseph received the order to go to Bethlehem, he was filled with alarm; and imparted the news to Mary with a heavy heart. For although he alone was required by the law to go, yet he was sorely exercised on account of his holy spouse. He could hardly venture to take her with him, for her days were almost accomplished; whilst to leave her in such a condition would be doing violence to his charity, reverence, and tender solicitude for her safety. But Mary, remembering the prediction of the prophet Micheas, and knowing it to be God's will that she should repair to Bethlehem, encouraged her chaste spouse to unreserved submission to the holy will of God. The prospect of soon beholding and bearing in her arms and pressing to her bosom her infant Saviour, softened the asperities of the journey and animated her with invincible fortitude.

3. FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM

The day being appointed for their departure, the simple couple provided themselves with what was most necessary for the journey, which, as they knew, lay partly through very inhospitable regions. It was at the beginning of the winter season, when the long, cold night was succeeded by the chilly, cheerless day, when the bright skies were hidden by heavy, leaden-colored clouds, when the harsh winds of late autumn sighed through the lofty branches of the darkening pine trees, when nature had been stripped of her beauteous summer garb, that the lily of Israel, the fair and tender blossom of

the root of Jesse, was to come forth in her simple and timid beauty.

Leaving Nazareth, their road led through long rows of fig and olive trees, now denuded of their foliage, into the extended plains of Esdrelon, which stretch far away over a distance of fifty miles to the mountains of Samaria, whose bold outlines were just visible in the hazy atmosphere. On these plains, Holofernes had encamped with his army and met his death at the hands of the heroic Judith of Bethulia. Mary, the true Judith, now traversed these same plains in order to deliver her people, by the birth of her Son, from their tyrant-oppressor, Satan. In the summer season these plains, glowing with ripening fields and dotted with groves of stately trees in leaf, were a very paradise; now they were monotonous and bleak, and the road, although level and easy, was wearisome to the eye and heart of the traveler.

4. THEY ARRIVE IN DAVID'S CITY

The journey is about to end! In pious contemplation and subdued prayer, the pilgrims approached Bethlehem from the west, where the ascent from the plain was gradual and easy.

Immediately they repaired to the Roman tax-office, where all new arrivals in the city had to report and register their names. This office was in the old homestead of King David, just outside the town. To it came Mary and Joseph in order to comply first of all, even before finding lodgings, with the requirements of the law. Here they encountered a swarm of Roman and Jewish officials engaged on the work of enrollment and of reception of tributes, and soldiers engaged in keeping in order the crowd of applicants from all parts of the country, who were eager, as it was already nightfall, to be the first to enter their names and then hasten away to some place of shelter and refreshment.

CHAPTER II

NO SHELTER IN BETHLEHEM FOR MARY AND JOSEPH

1. THE UNKINDNESS OF THE BETHLEHEMITES

LEAVING the public building, Mary and Joseph pursued their way to the top of the hill, entered Bethlehem, and at



Martin Feuerstein

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THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE

once repaired to the inn. This was a series of large buildings just within the city gates, containing accommodation for whole caravans of travelers, together with their merchandise and beasts of burden. In these inns usually all strangers were received and lodged; but for Mary and Joseph, as the evangelist relates, there was no room.

Joseph was troubled at this humiliating occurrence, principally on the Virgin's account, who was excessively fatigued. But, as he had been born in the town and had some acquaintances living there, he felt certain of being able to find shelter in some private house, and resolved to seek lodgings among these friends and acquaintances. But these would hardly recognize him, or else sought various pretexts not to understand nor to grant his petition. Side by side with his blessed spouse, did Joseph traverse the streets, going from door to door, but no heart was softened by his piteous appeals. At length they reached the opposite end of the town, and Joseph's anxiety increased at every step, for night was coming on. Heartless people of Bethlehem! You turn from your doors the mother of your Saviour. "The Son of Man came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He to whom the heavens belong can find no room on the earth. In Bethlehem's homes are joy and comfort and warmth, while the Saviour of the world wanders in the street. At last, when all else had failed, Joseph remembered that there was to the east of the city a lonely cave, into which the shepherds used sometimes to drive their flocks in severe weather. Passing the city walls they approached the cave in the rock.¹ It lay to the east of the city, at the foot of a small hill, and amid a grove of terebinth and cedar trees, whose branches formed a kind of arbor over the entrance, protecting to some extent the outer part of the grotto from the violence of the storm. The interior was divided into several caves, as is frequently

¹A chapel was erected over this grotto in the first century. Above and around this, Constantine afterward built a church of considerable size. About the year 550, Justinianus, one of the Eastern emperors, had this church torn down and a very costly and beautiful one built upon the sacred spot. This edifice, having breasted the storms of thirteen centuries, is still standing. Near the high altar, a winding-stairs leads down to the grotto where our Saviour was born. The precise spot is marked by a stone bearing the inscription, "Here Christ was born of the Virgin Mary." Leading out of the large cave is a passage to several others, in the largest of which St. Jerome dwelt when writing his explanation of the Scriptures. A Franciscan convent is attached to this church.

the case among these mountains. It contained nothing but a little hay and straw forgotten by the shepherds, and a wooden manger used to hold the fodder for cattle. Such was the palace prepared by heaven's King to receive His only begotten Son who was to redeem the world.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

1. THE HOLY DISPOSITION OF MARY BEFORE THE BIRTH OF JESUS

WE ARE about to enter on the contemplation of the events of Christmas night.

The blessed Virgin knelt before the manger in the stable absorbed in deep and silent prayer. Brighter and more beautiful grew the supernatural light in which she now saw, more plainly than ever before, the divine mysteries of heaven, and especially the sublime mystery of the ever adorable Trinity—the tri-personal God in His essential unity. Once more the profound mystery of the Incarnation of the eternal Word was presented to her soul, and she recognized and understood the reason why the only begotten Son of the eternal Father was pleased to become man. She discovered how, by this Incarnation, degraded human nature was to be rescued from the universal deluge of sin which had overtaken it, be restored to its original purity and dignity, and even to a higher and more honorable position than before its fall. In her humility she shrank before the splendor of her own dignity in being chosen to give birth to the God-man, and, in capacity of mother, to embrace and nourish Him. She, a simple handmaid of the Lord, deemed herself unworthy the custody of the infinite treasure. But this very humility augmented her transcendent fitness, by drawing down still more grace from heaven and enlightening still more her transparent soul. Her features were so resplendent with divine brightness and beauty, that she seemed no longer to be a child of earth. Her eyes were raised to heaven, her hands clasped upon her breast, her soul buried in the contemplation of the Deity.

2. THE SACRED HOUR

As the hour of midnight drew near, a flood of celestial light pervaded the stable. The bleak and gloomy roof and sides of stone were lost in the flood of glory, and disappeared from view. The gates of heaven were thrown wide open, and from before the throne of divine Majesty hosts of heavenly spirits winged their way to earth, that the promise of the Holy Ghost might be fulfilled. "All the angels of God shall adore thee." Yes, they were sent to pay homage to the Saviour, for at this moment the King of kings, glowing like the sun, came forth from His bridal chamber. The Son of God is born a man; and, bathed in an affluence of celestial light, outshining the glory of Mary and the brightness of the angels, reposes a miracle-babe before His kneeling mother. For an instant the newly made mother was lost in heavenly ecstatic contemplation.

3. THE HOMAGE OF MARY AND JOSEPH TO THE DIVINE INFANT

A feeble wail from the lips of the Child of heaven and of earth awoke its mother from her trance. Oh the indescribable, ravishing paroxysm of joy that seized her mother-heart as her eye fell upon her own child, and yet upon her King and Lord! What ardent words of adoration, as she looks upon her God and Creator! Prostrate upon the ground, she kisses the feet of her child, for He is her Creator; she kisses His hands, for He is her Lord and King. Again she imprints ardent kisses upon His infant lips, for this God and Creator, this Lord and King, is in reality her own treasure, her own child, her only, first born Son.

As we contemplate this scene, we are forced to cry out with Louis of Granada: "O grant us, Queen of heaven, Gate of paradise, Temple of the Holy Ghost, Seat of eternal, uncreated wisdom, impart to us a share of that rapturous devotion which overflowed thy heart at sight of this transcendent mystery of Christ's birth. What must have been thy rapture when holding in thy arms, Him whom the heavens cannot contain! What thy thoughts at hearing the feeble wail and seeing the trickling tear issuing from a shivering infant, upon whom it was the delight of the angels to gaze! What a thrill darted through thy soul as thou rememberedst that, among all the women who had ever been born, thou wast the only one chosen by heaven to be the mother of the Messiah, and con-

sequently, to be the Queen of heaven! What were thy feelings on gazing upon Him whose first earthly glance was fixed upon thy own sweet matronly countenance? How devotedly didst thou offer thyself as a voluntary sacrifice to Him who had come to offer Himself a victim for the sins of the world!"

And now St. Joseph draws near to the divine Infant. He falls down and adores, joy and reverence fill his heart, tears of gladness bedew his cheeks, words of gratitude escape his trembling lips. He takes the infant Jesus in his arms and presses Him to his heart, and his soul is unable to contain the joy which overflows it.

Mary now wrapped the child in swaddling garments and laid it on some straw in the manger.

4. REFLECTIONS BEFORE THE MANGER

Who is this child lying between two beasts in a cheerless stall, and yet whom all the angels are saluting? Who can this be, hidden under the straggling straw, and yet lighting up the heavens by His presence? It is a babe according to the flesh, a babe lying in a crib, but great is He in heaven where the very sun, moon, and stars obey His will, and angels proclaim His power and majesty in strains of triumphant music. Great He is, too, upon the earth, for Herod shudders at His birth and all Jerusalem with him. Ever blessed manger that held the infant Saviour of mankind! Thou art more privileged than the castle of the king or the palace of the prince. A little child weeps, and its tears and its wailings count more than all the music of the earth and all the songs of the celestial choirs. A ray of the eternal Father's glory nestles in the straw, the author of the angels is nourished with scanty milk. Thrice happy birth of God in the flesh, by which the birth of man is renewed, his misery alleviated, his chains broken, and the dread account of condemned nature cancelled, so that each one who was born unto death, may now be born again to life. For to those who receive thee, thou givest power to become the children of God. Truly Thou art a merciful child, for mercy created Thee. Not for Thyself wast Thou born, but for our sake and advantage, and not to please Thy own whim. Thou hast lowered Thyself, that, by Thy humility, Thou mightest raise the deep-fallen of our race, to glorify us by Thy lowliness. Sacred and blessed night on which the heavens touched the earth, and man received as the surest

pledge of divine mercy the King of heaven as a child of earth.

5. THE SPIRITUAL BIRTH OF JESUS IN OUR HEARTS

And this grace-laden gift of heaven to man shall be repeated henceforth on each returning year for all ages. All that is imparted on this holy night to the entire world will be renewed in favor of every individual soul; for this child of mercy, even to this day, seeks nothing else than to be spiritually born in the heart of every Christian. In deed and truth, would the birth of the eternal Word in the stable at Bethlehem, and all the other solemn events of Christmas night be vain and useless to you if Christ be not born in spirit in your heart. Consider, therefore, in what this spiritual birth consists.

When the sinner casts a look backward upon the past years of his earthly pilgrimage, and discovers with a shudder of shame and fear how much precious time he has wasted in idle, transitory, worldly efforts, and with what countless stains of avarice, lust, and pride he has soiled his immortal soul; when he examines and reckons closely what he has done out of pure love for God and for his own eternal salvation, and discovers little or nothing; when he becomes thoroughly conscious of his poverty of soul and utter helplessness, and looking into all his well-made but ill-kept resolutions, feels that he is no longer able to rise from this slough, that past and future seem veiled in a thick cloud of incipient despair; and when suddenly a flash of light bursts through this heavy cloud, and the unhappy man sees in this light the divine-human heart of Jesus, with its deep recesses of true love and abounding grace; when he hears the voice of the Good Shepherd saying "Trust in Me, follow Me, I have helped and will still help you;" if the sinner at this moment stretches forth his arms imploringly and earnestly to the Sacred Heart, and cries out: "Lord, save me, I perish! Lord, I believe that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God! In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me share in the treasures of Thy grace established by Thee in Thy holy Church! O Lord, I wish to love Thee with all the powers of my soul;" if then, strengthened in faith, hope, and charity, he makes a brave effort to rise, with the firm determination to maintain the contest for the spirit against the flesh, and so to walk in the spirit and after the example of Christ, then is Christ spirit-

ually born again in that man, and true Christmas happiness exists in his soul.

And there is joy and thanksgiving on occasion of such a birth. The angels rejoice and declare heavenly peace to his soul. For, if the soul persevere with firmness and carry out the good resolutions made in reliance upon Christ; if the flesh be subjected to the spirit, and the spirit be obedient to Christ; then a true and lasting peace flows in upon the soul, which begins at once to feel the truth of the divine words, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your soul, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light."

CHAPTER IV

OTHER EVENTS OF CHRISTMAS NIGHT

1. EARTH'S HOMAGE: THE ANGELS

DESCRIBING the glory of the Holy Name, the apostle St. Paul says that at the name of Jesus, the God-Man, all powers in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth must bow down and adore. For He it is who, by His holy cross, hath opened the closed portals of heaven, in order that those places of happiness made vacant by the fall of Lucifer and his adherents might be filled by the souls of just men. It is He who, by His blessed name, raised the curse which had pressed upon mankind, and through their fault, upon the very earth itself. It was He who overthrew the power of hell, and triumphantly wrung from the hands of the evil spirit the dominion which He had held over Adam's sons for such a long time. You can not wonder, then, that at the very hour of this Saviour's birth, a mysterious and miraculous movement was felt in heaven, on earth, and in the very pits of hell. Whilst at this awful moment the devils were trembling in hell, heaven and earth were glad, and in their joy paid homage to the new-born king. This king is verily God and man, God of heaven and man of earth. Heaven and earth have claims upon Him; let us, therefore, contemplate by the crib of Jesus the Ambassadors from heaven and the Representatives of earth.

Of these messengers from heaven, the Church, on Christmas day, sings: "On this day the King of heaven was pleased

to be born of a virgin, and hence the armies of the angels rejoice, for everlasting salvation has come to man." In similar strains had the Psalmist sung prophetically: "Sion heard and was glad; adore Him all you His angels." Who can describe this joy of Sion—of the heavenly Jerusalem? What indescribable festive joy there must have been in the celestial heights, when the eternal Father proclaimed to Seraphim and Cherubim, to all the choirs of angels, that the Saviour of the world had been born on earth! In what joyous haste they swept down to the confines of earth to offer tributes of praise and adoration before the crib of the new-born King of heaven! In ravishing strains, the like of which had not been heard since the creation of heaven, they sung in rapturous voices the praises of the infant Redeemer and of His unbounded mercy.

2. EARTH'S HOMAGE: THE SHEPHERDS

Meanwhile one of the choirs of the joyous angels hastened away to announce the glad tidings to the neighboring shepherds. St. Luke thus relates this extraordinary event: "And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the Angel said to them: Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For this day is born to you a SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will."

On the plains of Bethlehem the lambs, sheep, and oxen set apart for the daily sacrifices in the temple at Jerusalem used to be kept and fed. The shepherds, under whose care they were placed, were usually simple, devout, and God-fearing men, who, with holy impatience, were looking forward to the coming of the Messias. An old legend informs us that among these men, three were especially remarkable for their ardent love for God and their strict fidelity to His commandments; and that just at the solemn hour of midnight these three shepherds, while watching their flocks, were engaged in ear-

nest conversation about the expected Redeemer of the world. Thus from amongst the millions of men upon earth, an all-wise God was pleased to select these simple-minded shepherds to be the ambassadors to Christ, the representatives before the crib, of the whole human family; the bearers to the infant Saviour of almost the first act of adoration and of respect and reverence to His blessed mother. What a choice privilege for these devout men! Men, poor in money and goods, wanting in education and worldly knowledge, but rich in love and ardor for their Redeemer, in innocence and childlike faith, were chosen by the Almighty in preference to the great and the learned, in order to verify fully and truly the prophetic words of the Psalmist, "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise" (*Ps.* viii. 3).

The honest shepherds believed at once the words of the angelic messengers, and raising their eyes to heaven, listened with ravished ears to the strains of celestial melody. They said, looking at each other in amazement: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see these things that have come to pass." They hurried forward to the cave. Never did high-priest enter with more awe and reverence into the Holy of Holies in Solomon's mighty temple than did these simple untutored men into the shadow of the grotto at Bethlehem. With clasped hands and bowed heads and hesitating step, they advanced to the manger, knelt down respectfully, bowed their faces to the earth, and humbly poured out their heart-deep adoration. So overcome were they with feelings of love and devotion that they shed tears of joy. Although their souls feasted upon the beauteous countenance of the divine babe, they were compelled to arise from their knees unsatisfied and to return to their shepherd duties. Casting a last look upon the divine countenance, they withdrew from the grotto. And Mary—patient, humble Mary—prudent mother that she was, "kept all these things pondering them in her heart."

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE INFANT IS CIRCUMCISED AND CALLED JESUS

"AND after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, His name was called JESUS, which was

called by the Angel, before He was conceived in the womb'' (*Luke ii. 21*).

1. CIRCUMCISION. WHY JESUS OBEYED THE LAW

We know that under the old dispensation, circumcision was of divine precept, and ordained by God for three reasons: firstly, as a sign of His covenant with His chosen people; secondly, as a figurative admonition to spiritual circumcision of the heart and to subjugation of unclean desires of the flesh; and thirdly, as a humiliating reminder that the newly born child of man is a sinner and has justly forfeited his right to eternal life.

This ceremony being a painful one to the infant, the tender-hearted virgin mother looked forward to the time of its performance with fear and anxiety; indeed, she anticipated and felt before hand, in her own heart, the smarting pain of her beloved child. At dawn on the eighth day the ceremony took place. After the ceremony, the priest recited the prayer prescribed for the occasion, saying: "Blessed be the Lord our God, who hath sanctified His beloved one from his mother's womb, and who hath imprinted His law upon our flesh and marked His sons with the seal of His holy covenant, for a participation in the blessings of our father Abraham." And the bystanders responded in the words of the psalmist: "Salvation to him whom Thou hast chosen to be thy son." The tears of the grieving mother flowed silently, when the first blood of her divine Son was shed for the forgiveness of our sins; she mingled her tears with the tears of her innocent Lamb.

Wherefore these tears? Why did the sinless Jesus choose to submit to a law prescribed for sinners only? To this inquiry the holy writers of the Church give the following reply: In the first place, the Saviour wished to prove that He had a real human body, and not an imaginary one, as some heretics afterward attempted to maintain. Secondly, He wished to recognize openly the laws and requirements of the old dispensation, for they had been prescribed by God Himself. Thirdly, he wanted to establish before the world His descent in the flesh from Abraham. Fourthly, by undergoing circumcision, He gave us an example of the obedience with which we should comply with the precepts and counsel of the Church, even when they require from us something very repugnant to our inclinations, or appear themselves to be but

trifling ceremonies. Fifthly, He wished to begin, on the day on which He received the name of Jesus or Saviour, His bitter sufferings, by the shedding of His blood. Sixthly, He wished to assume the burden of the old law, in order thereby to free us from its observance, as stands written in St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians: "God sent His Son made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law." Lastly and chiefly, that by submitting Himself like an ordinary sinner to the law of circumcision, He might prove Himself to be the one who was to take away sin from the world—the representative and substitute of all sinful humanity. In His Incarnation and birth He had taken the form of a man, but in His Circumcision He took the form of a sinner; of a representative of all sinners, in order to take upon himself the divine curse and to atone for the iniquities of all men. Praise, honor, and thanks to Thee, therefore, my Jesus, for ever and ever. With love and sympathy for Thee in Thy first bloodshed, I salute Thee as my bleeding bridegroom, who, in the earliest hours of life, as well as in the last, wished to be espoused to me in suffering. Sun of Justice! how thou dost glow in Thy rising and in Thy setting, in the stable and on the cross, and each time in Thy crimson garb of saving blood! A rosy, crimson morning denotes an evening shower. What means the crimson aurora of Thy Circumcision, but that the evening of Thy life will see a shower of Thy blood flowing from every vein in Thy sacred body. Blessed be Thy infinite love for us, thanks for all those sufferings of body and soul undergone by Thee for the sake of us.

2. THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS. ITS MEANING, SWEETNESS, AND MIRACULOUS POWER

When the child was circumcised, His name was called Jesus. Whence came this sweet and adorable name? You know, Christian reader. Man did not discover it, no finite mind invented it, the earth did not bring it forth, it originated in heaven. And when it was decided upon by the blessed Trinity, a prince of heaven was commissioned to carry it and to proclaim it to the world, and first of all to the chosen Virgin Mary: "Thou shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name *Jesus*;" and again to St. Joseph: "Thou shalt call His name *Jesus*, for He will deliver His people from their sins."

Yes, that is the meaning of the Holy Name of Jesus, Liberator—Liberator from the depths of an abyss from which there could otherwise be no escape; Deliverer from the curse which had weighed upon creation for 4,000 years; Deliverer from the yoke of sin, from the slavery of the devil, in which all the nobler powers of human nature had been broken down; Deliverer from intellectual darkness, from obdurate hearts, from an enfeebled will; Deliverer from everlasting death to which we had been condemned by sin. Such is the meaning of the holy name of Jesus.

CHAPTER VI

THE THREE WISE MEN ARE CALLED FROM THE EAST

1. THE STAR OF PROMISE

WE FIND wealthy and powerful kings, as well as poor, unknown shepherds, in adoration before the crib of Bethlehem; these indeed summoned by an angel, the former by the miraculous appearance of a star in the eastern sky. Of this extraordinary star, which was to appear in the fullness of time, in "the days of the great king," mention had been made in the fourth book of Moses, 1500 years before the birth of Christ. The history is as follows: When the Israelites were about to pass through the land of Moab, on their way to Canaan, King Balak summoned to his court a heathen prophet named Balaam, to curse the Hebrew people. But the Lord compelled the false prophet, against his will, to pronounce a blessing; so that, looking far away into future ages, and raising his voice, he said: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not near. A STAR SHALL RISE OUT OF JACOB AND A SCEPTER SHALL SPRING UP FROM ISRAEL: AND SHALL STRIKE THE CHIEFS OF MOAB, AND SHALL WASTE ALL THE CHILDREN OF SETH. . . . Out of Jacob shall he come that shall rule."

From this remarkable prophecy, the heathen nations had learned to believe that among the Jews a mighty king would one day be born, who would bring the Gentiles and their whole territory under his subjection. While most people naturally, in the course of long ages, lost sight of this won-

derful prophecy, some few prominent and earnest men, who were well versed in astronomy, kept its remembrance fresh in their thoughts. So much importance did the Gentiles attach to the prophet's words, that, as tradition avers, certain persons were appointed to take their station on Mount Victoralis, there to observe the heavens, and to watch and pray that God would soon permit this extraordinary star to appear in the firmament. But the watchers died without seeing the star. The desire for a Saviour did not, however, die with them; but was kept alive by transmission of the tradition from father to son through all generations. The watchmen on the mountain were replaced by others, from age to age.

On Christmas night a strange star of unusual brilliancy was discovered in that portion of the sky toward Judea. Some astronomers are of opinion that it was merely a clustering together of several of the ordinary heavenly bodies, which had been brought unusually close together in their varied revolutions. But, as these scientific men are not agreed in their opinions about the relative positions of these heavenly bodies, nor about the time of the occurrence, we prefer to abide by the venerable tradition and the opinions of the old church fathers, and to believe that the eternal Father created an entirely new star, which He placed in the heavens in order to glorify the coming upon earth of His divine Son. For we read in St. Matthew that at the *second* coming of Christ to judge the world, "*the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens.*"

2. THE THREE KINGS SET OUT ON THEIR PILGRIMAGE

At once several of the devout people of the East set out for Judea in order to visit the long-expected king and to pay him their homage. Chief among them were three estimable princes of the country, named Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar, who felt themselves inspired by heaven to undertake the journey. Being well versed in the science of stars and acquainted with the old prophecy of Balaam, they were called Magi, or the Wise Men. As these three persons, each in his own country, were engaged on the night of the Lord's nativity, in studying the movements of the stars, and, like their forefathers, praying and yearning for the Redeemer's coming, they saw simultaneously this unusually large and brilliant orb appear suddenly in the firmament in the direction of Judea. At once they knew, by special revelation, that now at last the long-

wished-for star of promise had arisen. Admirable miracle of God's omnipotence! Glorious proof of that divine mercy which selected not only the people of Israel, but likewise summoned our pagan ancestors to worship, in the crib, the King of heaven and the Saviour of earth; the Jews in the persons of the believing shepherds of Bethlehem, the heathens in the persons of the three wise men from the East; the Jews, by an angel, as messenger of supernatural revelation, the heathens by a star, as figurative of natural revelation.

It is impossible to describe the joy of the three kings when they discovered the brilliant star—first, with the eyes of their body, and then, by internal revelation, with the eyes of their soul—and learned that now the desires of their fathers were attained, for the glorious morning-star of salvation, the Messias, had really appeared to men. Their joy was soon made practical. They immediately resolved to set out, notwithstanding the severity of the winter season and the difficulties of a journey of more than a hundred leagues, to visit Judea and there adore the new-born king. In treating this subject, St. Leo remarks: "He who had given them the star for a sign imparted to them the meaning of the sign, and what He imparted to them He influenced them to visit."

So the three devout and learned princes prepared to set out, each one from his own land, taking with them valuable offerings to be presented to the new-born King. Each was accompanied by several companions, military attendants, servants, and a number of people of various grades, so that the words of the prophet Isaias were fulfilled: "Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about, and see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee: The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Ephraim: all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and shewing forth praise to the Lord."

When all was ready, the royal caravan moved off, and the star which they had seen at home accompanied them as guide and faithful companion during the whole pilgrimage. The wise men, while meditating with deep devotion and entertaining feelings of true reverence, kept their gaze fixed upon their heavenly messenger, and occasionally held conversation together, or chanted hymns of praise. On they went, over extensive countries, through vast deserts, across streams. When they passed through a town, the inhabitants would come out to gaze with wonder at the splendid equipments of the princes, their numerous attendants, and the long line of camels and dromedaries; though no one along the route, even close to Jerusalem, seemed to know anything about this new-born king for whom the travelers eagerly inquired.

3. HEROD AND THE JEWISH COUNCIL

At last, after much fatigue and inconvenience, they came within sight of Jerusalem. With what unfeigned delight they hailed the appearance of this holy city, which they fondly supposed to be the goal of their pilgrimage! Surely here, in this widely renowned metropolis of Judea, the new-born king would be found. But as they came near to the stately gates, the star suddenly disappeared from the heavens. The astounded travelers did not look upon this event as foreboding much good. Yet they determined to enter the royal city of King Herod, and, as they passed in long procession through the streets on their way to the palace, an immense concourse of people came out in surprise to view this unexpected embassy, as they supposed it to be; for never before had three kings honored their city with their united presence on the same day.

King Herod received his honored visitors with apparent respect and friendship, and conducted them into the royal saloons to hear the object of their coming. The eldest and chief one among the princes then said: "From the land of morning are we come to do homage to the new-born king of the Jews, for we have seen His star in our sky, that star for which our forefathers waited in vain for centuries, but which has now at last appeared and guided us hither by its own bright rays. Tell us, therefore, gracious and mighty king, where resides this long-expected ruler of Israel?" The cruel and jealous Herod was shocked at this inquiry on the part of these intelligent strangers. But concealing, as well as he

could, his deep anxiety and jealousy, he replied in apparent good faith to his royal guests: "Your inquiries are indeed of the greatest importance and significance, but you must be fatigued after your long and wearisome journey and need some repose. Take a few hours, therefore, together with all your attendants, to enjoy refreshment and rest; and, at the proper hour, I will give you the fullest information possible." The three kings and their retinues of men and beasts sought repose in the quarters provided by Herod.

Orders were immediately dispatched by couriers to all the chief-priests and scribes and other learned men of the city to assemble at once for the consideration of the important and unexpected subject, introduced by the advent of this extraordinary embassy. The novelty of the occasion had the effect of bringing them speedily and in full numbers to the council-hall, where they took their seats arrayed in the full robes of their priestly office and holding in their hands all the books of the law and the prophets. At the head of the Sanhedrim sat Hillel, the great master and philosopher. With him sat the Rabbi Samnas, or Simeon, the white-haired prophet, and the Rabbi Haccana, son of the late Nehumia ben Haccana. This last had written a very remarkable work on the Messiah, called "The Unraveling of the Mysteries," and in the last jubilee week before Christ had uttered the startling prophecy: "But fifty years hence, and the king of Israel for whom the people are waiting will appear." At his dying hour, he said to his son: "Thou art happy, Haccana, for thy eyes will see the day of the Lord." All these remarkable predictions were now being fulfilled, for here are these three important personages who seem convinced that the "day of the Lord" has really dawned.

After they had carefully consulted their books, the members of the council said to Herod: "If the Messiah has really appeared, He must be now in Bethlehem in the land of Juda, for so it is written in the books of the prophet Micheas: 'AND THOU BETHLEHEM Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the ruler in Israel, and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity'" (*Micheas*, v. 2). At this intelligence, Herod became very uneasy, and at once conceived the most bloodthirsty projects and designs to destroy this child. He resolved that the Hebrew boy must die, if he had a thousand lives. He sent secretly for the Wise

Men, and in a private interview made many anxious inquiries regarding the appearance of the star, the manner, time, and other circumstances. He then addressed them, saying: "Information concerning this ruler of Israel whom you seek has been found by my priests in our holy books. You will proceed southward from this city to a town called Bethlehem, and seek diligently after the child, and when you shall have found him, let me know at once, that I may come with my court to do him honor."

CHAPTER VII

THE THREE WISE MEN MAKE THEIR ADORATION TO THE INFANT JESUS

1. THEY PREPARE TO ADORE JESUS

HARDLY had the three kings bidden adieu to Herod and issued from the gates of Jerusalem when the vanished star appeared again with all its wonted brilliancy. At this welcome and cheering sight the whole caravan burst forth into acclamations of joy, and of thankfulness to the God who had favored them with such special graces. With renewed courage and increased longing for the object of their search, they hastened on to Bethlehem, and soon the gray walls and ancient battlements of David's city greeted their eyes. The entrance into the town of such an unusually large and brilliant cavalcade brought out the whole of the wondering population. But the pilgrims kept their eyes fixed upon their guiding star and followed its movements, till it led them to the outskirts of the town, where it stood still directly above the lowly stable.

The Magi now felt convinced that their journey was ended and their object attained. Yet they were sorely puzzled at seeing no palace, not even a cottage. Only a ruinous stable stood before them. They could not understand how He, whose glory had been proclaimed by heaven itself, could dwell in this poor and gloomy abode of cattle. Yet there stood the miraculous star shedding its brightest rays in a shower upon this abandoned ruin. But, as they were looking, with doubt and misgiving, into the stable, their souls were, in reward of humility and perseverance, so brilliantly enlightened by the



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Holy Ghost, and they understood and appreciated so thoroughly the poverty and self-denial of the Infant Prince, that they trembled at discovering how near they were to the King of heaven and how soon to appear in His presence.

Hastily adjusting their travel-stained garments, arranging their presents and collecting their thoughts together, they prepared themselves for a becoming appearance before their King. To-day may be seen, near the large church in Bethlehem, a small chapel with an altar erected on the very spot where the three Magi got themselves in readiness before entering the stable.

2. THEIR ADORATION AT THE MANGER

They found Mary seated, with the divine Infant in her arms, while St. Joseph stood near gazing with eyes of tender affection upon His heavenly Charge. Completely overpowered at this spectacle of poverty and humility, the eastern kings, unable to utter a word, sank upon their knees before the child. In their hearts, however, silent canticles of praise, of adoration, and of thanks, sweeter and more expressive, and more acceptable than the psalms of David, were struggling for utterance.

3. THEIR THREE-FOLD OFFERING

At last they rose from their devotions, and having reverently and fondly kissed the feet of the infant Jesus, opened their treasures, and with bowed heads and bended knees, presented their offerings of gold, incense, and myrrh, before the altar of the manger.

And now learn the meaning of the three gifts. Gold is the king of metals, and symbolizes royal dignity. Incense symbolizes the divine nature and the priestly office. Myrrh is the bitter spice used in embalming bodies, and symbolizes the humanity of Christ dying upon the cross.

4. THEIR RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY

The devout kings had now accomplished their desire and finished their pilgrimage, having seen Jesus with their own eyes and presented their offerings, and received in return many blessings of heaven and much wonderful enlightenment. Taking leave, therefore, of the holy family, they prepared to return quietly to Jerusalem, in order to inform Herod of their

great and happy success. But during the night preceding their departure, as they lay asleep in their tents, they had a vision of angels, one of whom said: "Arise and hurry away to your homes, but do not pass through Jerusalem: take the route through the desert, for Herod must not see your faces or learn a word from your lips."

After a long and fatiguing ride they reached their own country, and announced to their eagerly inquiring friends and neighbors how they had been guided by the strange star, described their interview with Herod, and their indescribable happiness at finding the new-born King. An ancient writer tells us that after the ascension of our Lord, the holy apostle St. Thomas went to the East and baptized the three kings, who, from that time, became staunch defenders and eloquent preachers of the faith of Christ, and afterward were made bishops. Some years later, their remains were brought to Constantinople, were removed afterward to Milan, and were finally brought by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa to the city of Cologne, where they are to-day held in profound veneration.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE— THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—CANDLEMAS

1. THE LAW ON THE DEDICATION OF CHILDREN. PURIFICATION

A FEW weeks after the departure of the wise men, the days of the Purification, as St. Luke informs us, were accomplished, in accordance with the law of Moses. For every Jewish mother who had given birth to a male child was required to repair to the temple after the lapse of forty days, and amid sacrifice, benediction, and prayer, to seek the prescribed purification, or release from uncleanness and from exclusion from the temple. The law required her to offer a lamb one year old as a burnt-offering, and, besides, a pair of doves for a sin-offering. If the mother were poor, she might bring a second dove instead of the more costly lamb.

The law, moreover, required that every first-born son should be carried to the temple and dedicated to the Lord; and un-

less he belonged to the tribe of Levi, he was then to be released by the payment of a ransom of five shekels. This ceremony had been established by God himself in remembrance of that night on which the destroying angel slew all the first-born of Egypt, but spared the first-born of Israel.

2. FROM BETHLEHEM TO JERUSALEM

So the holy mother of God prepared to set out with her spouse, St. Joseph, on their journey to the Holy City. They soon stood before the gates of Jerusalem.

Quietly and unnoticed the holy family passed through the streets on their way to the temple, where they met the venerable old priest Simeon. It had been revealed by the Holy Spirit to this servant of God that he would not see death till he had first seen the consolation of Israel, the promised Messias.

3. MARY'S OFFERINGS

The Blessed Virgin was then conducted to that part of the temple where the purification of women usually took place. O pure and immaculate bride of heaven, who wast spotless before thy Son's birth, spotless in His birth, and spotless after His birth! Well didst thou know that no stain was in thee, and yet thou didst, with heartfelt humility, shrink into littleness at the thought that grace alone it was that saved thee, and not thy own deserts. Pondering such humble thoughts Mary stood up before the altar of purification, while the priests pronounced the prescribed prayers and benedictions over her, and killed the two doves—one as sin-offering, the other to be burnt.

4. CHRIST IS OFFERED IN THE TEMPLE

When the ceremony of purification was over, the venerable Simeon conducted the Holy Mother and her Child to the altar, where the presentation and ransoming of the first-born was performed. As she laid her Child on the "table of offerings," a supernatural light seemed to fill up the sacred edifice, and the glory of God was made manifest in the temple, while the eye of faith saw the heavens open above the sanctuary and a torrent of brightness poured down from the throne of the blessed Trinity over the Child of Grace. Just at this moment the prediction of the prophet Aggeus was verified:

“For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will move all nations: AND THE DESIRED OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Several priests were always present at the rite of Presentation. One of them took the Child from His mother's arms, held it over the altar of offering, raised his eyes to heaven, and pronounced the prescribed prayers and benedictions, whilst the devout parents offered the five pieces of silver for His ransom.

5. SIMEON. CANDLEMAS

Every requirement being complied with, the offerings were sacrificed, and the ceremony was over. Now holy Simeon gave full vent to his pious feelings. How long he had waited for this happy hour! The holy evangelist thus speaks of him: “And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the CHRIST of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child JESUS, to do for Him according to the custom of the law: He also took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said: Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace: Because my eyes have seen thy salvation. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Who could describe the sentiments of this venerable and saintly prophet, or picture the delight of his heart, as he gazed upon the object of his life-long prayers, sighs, and tears, the object of his longing and ardent desires? With what feelings of ardent love he stretched forth his arms to the beauteous Babe, to the all-holy treasure of the Godhead! Surely the tears of joy shed by this devout old man, his ecstatic look toward heaven, the ardent kisses impressed on the Infant's hands, all this was a thank-offering as pure, true, and pleasing to God as any that had ever been offered in the old law.

This salvation in Christ was described by holy Simeon as

a light to the revelation of the Gentiles. For he remembered the old prediction of the prophet Isaias, who, alluding to the future Messiah, declared: "I have given thee for a light of the Gentiles: that thou mightest open the eyes of the blind and bring forth the prisoner out of prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house; and the nations shall walk in thy light" (*Isaias*, xlii. 7). Simeon sees and praises this glorious and mysterious light, and directs the attention of all future generations to its comforting rays. Hence it is that the festival set apart by the Church to commemorate this event is called, as well as the Presentation of Christ, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin and Candlemas-day. The candles blessed on this day and carried in procession are a figure of Christ, the true light of heaven, recognized by Simeon and declared to be the salvation and glory of his people.

But why does the prophetic Simeon turn to the virgin-mother and wound her tender heart with the ominous words: "This *child* is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted: and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed?" (*Luke* ii.) Ah, this is the prophecy of that sad truth related as an accomplished fact one hundred years later by St. John the evangelist: "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it," that is, *would* not comprehend it. All those who were of good will and regretted their wanderings in the darkness of error, unbelief, and vice, received grace to turn to the light of Christ, to rise from the shadow of darkness and to become the children of God. Those, on the contrary, who called their dimness of intellect, light; their blindness, wisdom; who rose up in pride and anger against the light of Christ; such persons contradicted and rejected Him; thus their darkness became greater, and their fall deeper and more dreadful than before.

6. THE PROPHETESS ANNA

On this same memorable day, when the divine Child was recognized in the temple as the light of the world, not the men alone, but the women, too, were to have their representative. St. Luke pursues his story of this day, telling us: "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was far advanced in years,

and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow until four score and four years: who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day. Now she at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord: and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel."

As Mary and Joseph listened to the remarkable words of Simeon and Anna, they wondered that it had so soon pleased the Holy Ghost to make known the hidden glory of their child. All four together praised the mercy of God, and then the holy parents, bidding farewell to Simeon and Anna, returned with their infant to their own home at Nazareth.

CHAPTER IX

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT—THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

1. THE ANGEL'S WARNING

NOT long were the Holy Family permitted to enjoy the peace and retirement of their home in Nazareth. Herod's suspicion and jealousy were aroused, for he suspected that this wonderful child might be the long-looked-for Messiah who was to free the Jewish people from the dominion of their Roman conquerors, and become the ruler of a kingdom that was to extend to the ends of the earth. He conceived the dreadful purpose of putting to death all the male children of Bethlehem of two years of age and under.

But of what avail are the best laid plans of a villain when God is pleased to protect and save His own? "Behold," says St. Matthew, "an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the Child and His mother and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (*Matt.* ii. 13). An unexpected, painful, and difficult duty for the faithful foster-father of Jesus. Instantly, without time for preparation, and in the dead of night, he must abandon home, neighbors, friends, and relations, to set out over unknown and perilous roads to a strange and distant land. But he does not hesitate. Well grounded in the virtue of sub-

mission to the divine will, he arises immediately and goes to break the unpleasant intelligence to the blessed Virgin.

No murmur escapes her lips as she hastily prepares to leave her peaceful home and go forth into the world.

2. WHY TO EGYPT

To Egypt! Why to this pagan land? The evangelist himself tells us, in order that the word of the Lord spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled, saying: "Out of Egypt have I called My Son" (*Matt.* ii. 15). Consider how the history of Christ's life, even down to the minutest particular, had been foretold centuries before His birth, by the prophets of the old law. The Holy Ghost wished thereby to prepare the minds of men against the day of Christ's coming, as well as to furnish us with one of the most irrefragable proofs of His divinity. Had this Jesus, whose doctrines the apostles preached and whose miraculous life the evangelists wrote, come suddenly before men, as an entirely new and unexpected apparition, we can well understand how many would have refused to believe in Him. But when we remember that since the time of Moses, during a period of a thousand years, virtuous men, inspired by God, had written prophecies foretelling the minutest circumstances in the life of the promised Redeemer; that every page of the Jewish Scripture foretold him so plainly as to compel the most learned rabbis of the present day to pronounce the Old Testament one continued prophecy; that in the Christ preached by the apostles and described by the evangelists, all these prophecies have been fulfilled to the letter; how deplorable and reprehensible is the willful blindness of those who still persist in rejecting Him and His saving truths!

A second reason why Christ chose Egypt as the home of His infancy, was His wish to establish a parallel between Himself and the nation of which He was the true and lawful spiritual King; for it was in that country that the people of Israel passed the period of their national infancy.

Finally, the people of that country, sunk as they were to the lowest depths of idolatry, even to the worshiping of the devil himself, were the completest representatives of paganism. And it pleased divine Providence to afterward make their land the theater of the most glorious triumphs of Christ and of His Church. In preparation for this happy trans-

formation, Jesus took up His abode within its boundaries, sanctified it by His presence, and scattered His blessings profusely among its inhabitants.

3. THE JOURNEY TO JUDEA; THROUGH THE DESERT

In this land of Egypt, then, must the holy family seek protection from the cruel designs of Herod. It was midnight when Joseph and Mary, carrying the divine Infant, fled from Nazareth. All nature seemed buried in ominous repose, as, seated upon the faithful beast of burden, which had been their fellow-traveler before now, Mary, with Joseph at her side, slowly and cautiously descended the hill near the town, into the plain below.

But what course shall they now follow? In their great fear, they turned aside from frequented roads, and, shunning towns and inns where they might find some food and shelter, journeyed over secluded paths through Galilee, Samaria, and Judea; often sleeping under the canopy of heaven, and often tormented with thirst and hunger.

At length the weary wanderers reached their destination, beyond the jurisdiction of Herod.

4. INFANTICIDE

Meanwhile the uneasiness of the bloodthirsty tyrant in Jerusalem increased every day. Knowing nothing of the holy family's escape, he did not doubt but that his cruel edict would reach effectually the much dreaded "Ruler over Israel." Often already, had Herod's soul been stained with blood, and he shrank not, therefore, from this cruel slaughter of the innocents. Legend tells us that he invited all the mothers of Bethlehem to meet in the public town-hall, and to bring their children of two years old and under, so that he might award a prize to each child. How happy the unsuspecting mothers must have been on this day, as they arrayed themselves and their dear ones in holiday attire to make a creditable appearance before the king or his representatives!

Hardly were all safely within the building when the doors were fastened and Herod's executioners, rushing upon the horror-stricken mothers, tore the children from their arms, strangled and choked them, or trampled them to death. Conceive, if you can, the terror and anguish of these paralyzed mothers. When they saw the streams of blood and heard the

choking gasp or the piercing shriek of their dying innocents, the mothers, awaking from their stupor and realizing the extent of the dreadful calamity that a cruel prince had inflicted upon them, sent up an agonizing cry of terror and despair, that well might move even the stony-hearted minions of King Herod. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 'A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning: Rachel¹ bewailing her children, and would not be comforted because they are not'" (*Matt.* ii. 17, 18).

We can discover in this affliction of the Bethlehemite mothers, the decrees of divine justice, and in the fate of the innocent children, the mystery of God's mercy. For these innocents are to be envied and considered fortunate in having been selected as the first victims in the cause of Christ, and after so short-lived a pain, to be numbered among His glorious martyrs. The superabundant merits of Christ supplied all that was wanting in them of free-will and understanding; and, baptized in their own blood, they really did receive a prize and an ample share of that glory prepared by the Son of Man for those who follow Him through suffering and death.

CHAPTER X

RETURN OF THE HOLY FAMILY FROM EGYPT

1. THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

IN THEIR dreary exile in the land of Egypt, the Holy Family were favored with much consolation from heaven. Yet their involuntary, though necessary, intercourse with the pagan inhabitants became from day to day more and more distasteful. Their hearts grew sad as they witnessed the dismal idolatry and other cruel and disgusting vices of the Egyptians, and they yearned eagerly for a return to their own home. One night an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep, and addressed to him the thrice welcome words: "Arise and

¹Rachel, whose grave was on the plains of Bethlehem, near the village of Rama, was looked upon as the patroness or guardian of Bethlehem. The prophet in spirit discovers Rachel emerging from her tomb, weeping over the calamity that had befallen those whom she loved.

take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead that sought the life of the Child" (*Matt.* ii. 20).

An uncommon disease had overtaken Herod; a scorching heat racked his insides, an unappeasable desire for food tormented him; and yet, to eat but added to his internal agony. His body was fearfully swollen; and worms from internal ulcers, gnawing their way through his flesh and skin, crawled in thousands on his bed. To bodily pain was added, of course, dreadful mental anguish, as he remembered the sins of his past life, his oppressions, cruelties, and even murders, and now the approaching eternal penalties. In his despair he tried to kill himself, but had not the strength left in his withered arm. At last, in raging agony, he gasped forth his polluted soul, and Herod, the first enemy and persecutor of Christ, was dead.

The enemies of the Saviour were dead; hence the angel's long-desired, thrice-welcome message to Joseph came at last: "Arise and take the Child and His mother and go into the land of Israel." He arose at once, returned heartfelt thanks to heaven, and hastened to impart the joyful news to Mary. Mary, first raising her heart in gratitude to God, began at once preparations for their journey.

2. THE ARRIVAL

At last the weary pilgrims crossed the confines of Egyptian territory. St. Joseph now thought of going to Bethlehem, there to take up his abode, with Jesus and Mary, in the ancient city of David. "But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea, in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither." After Herod's death Archelaus received Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Antipas, who afterward put St. John to death and mocked Jesus Christ, received Galilee and Perea; and Philip, the remainder of Palestine. Archelaus was cruel, like his late father; having, among other evil deeds, slaughtered in one day 3000 Jews who had come to Jerusalem to assist at the celebration of the Passover. After submitting to his inhuman rule for ten years, his subjects succeeded in obtaining his deposition by the Roman emperor, and from that time Judea became a Roman province and was ruled over by a governor.

St. Joseph, hearing of the cruelty of Archelaus, became

alarmed for the safety of the Child. God heard the earnest entreaties of His servant, and again sent His angel to designate the part of the Holy Land to which the saintly family should repair. "Being warned in sleep," says St. Matthew, "Joseph retired into the quarters of Galilee," where Herod Antipas was then governing with comparative mildness. He willingly obeyed heaven's directions, and, as the same evangelist goes on to say, "Coming, he dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets: that He shall be called a Nazarite" (*Matt.* ii. 23).

As soon as the last message of the angel was received, our anxious travelers set out on their way to Nazareth. Who can describe the happiness of these poor pilgrims when they were once more permitted, after an absence of many years, to look upon their native town and home, to walk through the old familiar streets, to enter their own little cot, and to receive the warm and friendly welcome of kindred and neighbors!

CHAPTER XI

THE GROWTH OF JESUS

1. TWO NATURES IN CHRIST. GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OF HIS HUMAN FACULTIES

THOUGH the Holy Scriptures relate in full the flight of the child Jesus into Egypt and His return to Nazareth, yet they give us but three other circumstances of the whole remaining period of His boyhood and youth. These events are, first, the fact that "the Child grew and waxed strong"; His journey to Jerusalem; and His obedience to Mary and Joseph. St. Luke tells us: "The Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in Him. And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men" (*Luke* ii.).

Here let us endeavor to understand the difference between the two natures of Jesus Christ. He is at the same time both God and man. In His divine nature, as God, Christ could not advance or grow; for from the first moment of His Conception to the hour of His Ascension into heaven, He possessed an infinite wealth within Himself of divine omnipo-

tence, wisdom, and love; and could thus, even while a child, perform any conceivable miracle. As Man, on the other hand, Christ chose to become like to us in all things, with the exception of sin, which, obviously, does not belong essentially to human nature. He chose to assume a human body, not simply for the purpose of animating it by His divinity, or of concealing within it the beauty and majesty of His Godhead, as certain heretics of antiquity would maintain; but He wished to take, in the first moment of His Incarnation, a real human soul, and thus possess a human intellectual power, a human heart, and a human will, that He might be to us a real and true brother in the most perfectly close similarity of life, and so become our Redeemer. So our blessed Saviour chose, as Son of Man, to grow in a similar manner, that is, to advance and grow in years, and in a corresponding ratio of wisdom and beauty before God and men.

We must surely hold, and undoubtedly believe, that the Divinity of Christ permeated his humanity, enlightened and enlivened it; and this not at one time only, as, for example, at His Transfiguration on Mount Thabor, but at all times and in every moment of His earthly life. But in what way this human nature of Christ, without losing any of its essence, was lifted above life itself by divine majesty perfected and glorified, and in how far the human cognition, power and grace of Jesus Christ, and in what manner these qualities grew and developed internally and outwardly; all this is profound mystery and can not be grasped nor understood by human intelligence. And it is not necessary that we should fully comprehend this mystery; though it is very necessary that we should, with humble faith, acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the true Son of Man and true Son of God, and as such should adore and love Him as did Mary and Joseph.

2. THE JOY OF HIS PARENTS AT HIS GROWTH

It was the happy privilege of His parents to witness this mysterious growth of Christ in His humanity. Day after day, they saw the bodily powers of the child Jesus increase in strength and beauty. They saw upon each comely feature in His countenance the daily increasing evidences of the interior development of the powers of His mind and of the qualities of His heart. They saw His personal elegance growing in beautiful harmony with His inner dignity and holiness,

as evinced in the tone of His voice and in every movement and gesture.

You must bear in mind that the nature of their Child, the humanity of Christ, precisely because it was without the corruption of sin, and was joined in the most intimate life-union with the Godhead, was of and within itself, necessarily the most perfect and elevated humanity; so that Adam even in paradise, did not reach the excellence of the human nature of Jesus Christ, neither in beauty of person, in clearness of intellect, nor in goodness of heart. You may therefore imagine the unspeakable rapture enjoyed by the heaven-privileged parents of Jesus, as often as their glance alighted upon their boy, or as often as they conversed with Him. How lovely He must have been, too, in the eyes of other children; how polite toward the grown, how respectful toward the aged, how mild and compassionate toward the poor, how obedient toward His parents, how attentive to His daily occupation, how assiduous and cheerful at His labor, how child-like and simple in His conversations, how gentle and unassuming in His answers! And especially in those hallowed moments when, at home and united with Joseph and Mary, He sang the praises of God, or poured out His soul in fervent, humble prayer to His heavenly Father. What ravishing sentiments of love must then have overpowered the hearts of His parents! What glowing flames of charity must have lit up their gladdened souls!

CHAPTER XII

JESUS AT TWELVE YEARS OF AGE VISITS THE TEMPLE

1. THE PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM

BY A requirement of the old law, the Jews were obliged to visit, three times during the year, at Easter, Pentecost, and on the Feast of the Tabernacles, their holy sanctuary, the temple at Jerusalem; thus to make a pilgrimage to adore God in public and to openly acknowledge themselves to be the Lord's people.

The Holy Scriptures assure us that the parents of Jesus

complied willingly and scrupulously with this requirement of the old law, and went regularly every year up to Jerusalem to take part in the ceremonies of the feast of the Passover. Jesus did not accompany His parents on these pilgrimages till He was twelve years of age, for the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem was a difficult one of three full days' travel.

Jesus having at last attained His twelfth year, and the feast of the Passover having come round again, He was permitted and even obliged to accompany His parents to Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph looked forward to this occasion with much pride and satisfaction, and the child Jesus was delighted at the prospect of visiting His Father's house.

Hardly had the holy pilgrims reached Jerusalem than they were already in the temple.

These Passover solemnities, which the Holy Family were engaged in celebrating, lasted seven days. During this time the Sacred Scriptures were read and explained to the people by those versed in the law. Solemn sacrifices were offered, and public prayers were recited in common.

2. MARY AND JOSEPH LOSE JESUS AND GO IN SEARCH OF HIM

The pilgrimage to Jerusalem undertaken by Joseph and Mary with their Child, was to bring them a great sorrow and much dreadful alarm; for they were to lose their beloved Jesus for the space of three days. St. Luke thus describes this event: "And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child JESUS remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him."

It was usual, for those who had attended the festival of the Passover, on their return to their respective homes, to divide themselves into large parties; the men and women generally traveling in separate bands, while the children were permitted to remain with either division. Thus these two holy parents pursued their journey, each in his or her respective band, and had but little concern and no anxiety in regard to their dear Child.

The day being over, and all the travelers having completed their arrangements for the first night's rest, how dreadfully alarmed must Joseph and Mary have been when, on meeting,

they discovered, to their dismay, that the child Jesus was not in the company at all. They hurried from house to house and awoke the sleeping travelers, hoping to find their lost Child somewhere amongst them. But their search proving fruitless, they lost no time in retracing their steps, unattended, in the dead hour of the night, over the dark and dreary road back to Jerusalem. Reaching the city just at daybreak, they hurried through the streets, going from house to house of their kinsfolk and acquaintance, but all in vain. The second night and second day were equally sad, the morning of the third day dawned and the disconsolate parents were still on their weary search.

3. JESUS AMONGST THE DOCTORS IN THE TEMPLE

But where was the child Jesus during these three days? He was in the temple at Jerusalem. "And it came to pass," says the holy evangelist St. Luke, "that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers" (*Luke* ii. 46, 47).

There was set apart in the temple of Jerusalem a special hall where the teachers of the law, the scribes and other learned men used to assemble for the reading of the books of the law and of the prophets, and for the explanation of them to the people. It was the privilege of any one present at these conferences to ask questions and to propose objections. It was in this hall that the child Jesus passed most of the time during which His grief-stricken parents were looking for Him.

4. MARY AND JOSEPH FIND HIM ON THE THIRD DAY

The parents of Jesus came near the temple. They had now been seeking the lost Youth for three weary days, and their grief and consternation knew no bounds. They entered the door of the temple. There is their own child Jesus, He who had always been so humble, so retiring, so slow to speak. He is now sitting in the very midst of the great and learned doctors, listening to them, questioning them, and even instructing them, as if He were the most eminent teacher in Israel.

As soon, however, as our divine Saviour was apprised of their presence He hastened to meet His astonished and gratified parents. The hour of His heavenly Father had elapsed;

the heavenly mission, as far as it was to extend for the present, was fulfilled, the Son of God had done what was His duty at the time, and now He again belongs, as Son of Man, in obedience and humility, to His earthly parents. Conceive and describe, if you can, the delight and satisfaction of Mary and Joseph. Even the holy evangelist himself feels that no human description could suffice, and hence he depicts the inexpressibly happy finding in the following simple language: "And seeing Him, they wondered. And His mother said to him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them: How is this that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them" (*Luke* ii. 48, etc.).

During her quiet and retired life in Nazareth, the blessed Virgin had come to regard Jesus as her child. True, she never forgot for a moment that He was also really and truly the Son of God, but she did not clearly understand how and when this Son of God would enter upon and discharge the duties of His mission. To-day our divine Saviour seeks to lead His blessed mother's thoughts from His human to His divine nature. The God-man must be about His Father's business, that is, He must be occupied in the service of truth, justice, and holiness, and wherever an opportunity occurs of leading separated humanity back to its heavenly Father, to the end for which it was created. Hence, Jesus said to His mother and foster-father: "Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Truly, Mary comprehended, though not fully and perfectly, the mystery contained in the words of Her Son. But what she did understand pleased her.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOLY FAMILY AT NAZARETH

FROM His twelfth to His thirtieth year Jesus dwelt with Mary and Joseph in their humble home at Nazareth. Doubtless there were many events in their outer lives, and innumerable must have been the graces and wonders of their inner life; for it could not long be concealed from their little circle



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ST. JOSEPH

of friends and neighbors that Jesus was a mysterious Child set for the redemption and for the fall of many. And yet St. Luke relates the whole history of these eighteen years in a few simple words: "He was subject to His parents;" "His mother kept all these words pondering them in her heart;" "and Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men." These few words give us a perfect and touching picture of the Holy Family.

1. THE FAITHFUL FATHER

"A faithful man shall be much praised, and he that is the keeper of his master shall be glorified." Thus sings the Church on St. Joseph's day. He was the head of the Holy Family. Mother and Son were entrusted to his care and protection; by the labor of his hand he was to clothe and feed them, guard them against want and danger, and shield them from evil and misfortune. A valuable treasure was placed in his charge, a priceless jewel entrusted to his keeping. How his heart must have throbbed with reverential love! How fervently he must have thanked God for being permitted to call Jesus and Mary his own! How cheerfully did he devote every hour of that life to their welfare, by giving the sweat of his brow, the toil of his arm, the strength of his body, and the powers of his mind. The apostle Paul had not yet spoken, nor presented to the Christian house-father that great model, Jesus Christ, nor required of the faithful husband, that he should sacrifice himself for his wife and children, as Christ had sacrificed Himself for His spouse, the Church. St. Joseph discharged the duties of his state from the natural promptings, so to speak, of his pure and noble heart, and he discharged them with perseverance and assiduity day after day for a long period of years. He knew that he had the Son of God under his roof, and yet he did not look to God for any worldly wealth, he did not murmur against Providence, he looked for no miracle in his own behalf, he did not wish to leave to the angels the duty of feeding their Lord and his. Oh no; St. Joseph considered it an honor and a sacred privilege to be entrusted with this proud duty. While he depended upon God's protection and assistance, he applied his hands industriously to his work and gave his soul to prayer. *Work* and *prayer*, and both united in love. Such is the story of the every-day life in the happy home at Nazareth. And in order to discharge his duties toward his spouse and Child, as head

of the house, as representative of our Father in heaven, St. Joseph assumes the government, direction, and support of his little household. He commands, but not that his will, but the will of God, should be done. He governs his household, not according to his own whim and fancy, but in accordance with God's law.

2. THE AFFECTIONATE MOTHER

The foster-father, St. Joseph, is the *head* of the Holy Family, but Mary is the *heart*. And what do we find in this heart? St. Luke tells us: "Mary kept all these words pondering them in her heart;" in that heart which, on a previous occasion, had poured itself out in the words: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." From her youth upward, first in the temple at Jerusalem and afterward in her quiet home at Nazareth, Mary's heart abounded in charity, her mind was ever occupied with the divine words and promises, and her soul ever sighing for the coming of her Lord. But now, when her eyes are feasting day after day upon the beauteous person of the Word made flesh; when her ear is charmed with the sweet tones of His confiding voice; when the acts and omissions of Jesus form the constant subject of her wondering reflections; now indeed does she keep every word of His, every incident and circumstance of His life, as a precious jewel in the casket of her heart. But this busy and grateful heart of Mary does not impede her in the discharge of her household duties, for Jesus occupies both her heart and her hands.

3. THE OBEDIENT SON

"And Jesus was subject to them." He who was the King of kings lived eighteen years in the simple cottage, under the lowly roof of the Carpenter of Nazareth. And He Himself was a carpenter's Son, a willing and laborious helper of His aged foster-father and a thoughtful and untiring servant of His virgin-mother. Yes, Jesus was obedient for eighteen years in the solitude of a cottage in a mountain-village, and He has been obedient for nineteen centuries in the solitude of His tabernacle upon our altar."

PART IV

Jesus in His Sacred Office of Teacher

I

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

CHAPTER I

ST. JOHN PREACHING PENANCE

Matt. iii. 1-12; Mark i, 1-8; Luke iii. 1-20

“IN THE fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip, his brother, being tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina, under the high-priests Annas and Caiphas: the word of the Lord was made unto John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, baptizing and preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins, and saying: Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. As it was written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee. A voice of one crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain: and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

“And the same John had his garment of camel’s hair and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem, and all the country about the Jordan; and were baptized by him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

“And seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father. For

I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire.

“And the people asked him, saying: What then shall we do? And he answering, said to them: He that hath two coats let him give to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do in like manner. And the publicans also came to be baptized and said to him: Master, what shall we do? But he said to them: Do nothing more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers also asked him, saying: And what shall we do? And he said to them: Do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man; and be content with your pay.

“And as the people was of opinion, and all were thinking in their hearts of John, that perhaps he might be the Christ, John answered, saying unto all: I indeed baptize you with water unto penance; but there shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to stoop down and loose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Whose fan is in His hand, and He will purge His floor; and will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire. And many other things exhorting did he preach to the people.”

Here, then, on the very threshold of our Saviour's public life we meet St. John the Baptist. Distinguished for his great simplicity of life and close union with God, he was deemed worthy by the eternal Father to be the precursor of His divine Son.

From early youth he had dwelt in the solitude of the desert “until the day of his manifestation to Israel.”

When thirty years old he made his appearance on the banks of the river Jordan. All were astonished; for, not having been previously seen or heard of, and his origin and birth-place being unknown, his coming was like the apparition of a spirit from heaven. But the prophet Malachy's words were fulfilled: “Behold I send My angel, and he shall prepare the way before My face” (*Mal.* iii. 1). John prepared the way for Christ's coming, and discharged his duties as precursor in a threefold manner: by preaching penance, by his baptism, and by the testimony which he bore to Jesus of Nazareth, as the promised Messiah who had now really and truly come upon earth.

1. EXHORTATIONS TO PENANCE

What is penance? It is contrite acknowledgment of our sins, a willingness as far as we are able to abandon them, and an humble yearning for that Mediator in whom and through whom alone such an abandonment is possible. Without such a repentance, the redemption of mankind would not have been possible. Heaven could not relent until earth, conscious of its awful guilt, should sign for the mediation of its Redeemer. Hence God had, during 4000 years, been awakening mankind to this acknowledgment, and inciting him to this expectation and desire. Now, in the fullness of time, He sends the greatest of all the prophets, John the Baptist, who, uniting the exhortations, warnings, and threats of all previous prophets in one grand warning and threat of wrath to come, completes their work and makes men ripe for salvation. Sadducees and Pharisees came out to the Jordan to hear this mysterious preacher. Preventing grace had enabled the "brood of vipers" to find through John the way to salvation, that is, to Christ. And the Baptist earnestly warns them to co-operate faithfully with this preventing grace by repentance, and not to depend upon being of the race of Abraham.

St. John, while preaching penance in stirring and forcible language, preaches it much more forcibly by the example of his own penitential life. His dwelling is a bleak cavern, his garments the skins of wild beasts, his food locusts and wild honey, his drink the water of the river Jordan. His occupation by day is to preach penance to men, his occupation at night is prayer and watching.

2. "JOHN'S BAPTISM"

As an outward manifestation of interior penance, St. John added the ceremony of baptism. As a man, in washing his person, makes the double admission, first, that he is soiled, and second, that he desires to be cleansed, so each individual baptized in the Jordan confessed thereby that he stood in need of inward cleansing from the stain of sin, and that he ardently desired his soul to be thus purified by the saving power of Christ's grace, just as he would wish his body to be cleansed by the waters of baptism. And this is the deep meaning of John's baptism. It is a confession of guilt and at the same time the expression of an interior longing after purity and salvation. It was, therefore, a very reasonable and effectual

preparation for Christ, and yet only a preparation. For baptism in Christ could free the repentant sinner from sin, because in this baptism the soul participates in the redeeming blood of Christ. John's baptism, on the contrary, was only a figure, while Christ baptized in fire and the Holy Ghost, that is, by that Spirit which came down in fiery tongues upon the apostles; with that divine Spirit which enlightens the understanding and inflames the heart; with that Spirit which purifies the human soul from sinful stain, as the fire purifies the metal from dross. Of this baptism by and in the Holy Ghost was St. John's baptism the immediate symbol and preparation.

CHAPTER II

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST

Matt. iii. 13-17; Mark i. 9-11; Luke iii. 21-23

BEFORE introducing Himself as the Messiah, Christ wished to present Himself as the representative of fallen man, and as the Lamb of sacrifice bearing our sins. He effected this design by humbling Himself, and, like a sinner, subjecting Himself to the baptism of St. John.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him. But John stayed Him saying: I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus, answering, said to him: Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfill all justice. Then He suffered Him. And Jesus being baptized, forthwith came out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him. And behold a voice from heaven, saying: This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty years: being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph.”

Having taken leave of His beloved mother Mary, of His saintly foster-father St. Joseph, and of the humble home in Nazareth, Jesus set out toward Galilee to enter upon His public ministry. Finally He arrives on the banks of the Jordan, where John was then baptizing. The Baptist threw himself at the feet of Christ, when, for the first time, he looked upon

the divine countenance, and by a revelation from heaven, recognized Him as his Saviour. How overwhelmed with confusion he must have been, to see Jesus humble Himself before him and asking to be baptized, like any sinner! But Jesus knew well what He was doing. In the first place, He wanted to show us that virtue and sanctity must begin with humility, that is, with a lowering of one's self; in the second place, that the sacrament of baptism is the opening to God's kingdom on earth; in the third place, that He had really and truly taken the place of sinful and help-needing man, and would begin the work of atonement by assuming His guilt. By His baptism in Jordan's waters He wanted to consecrate and sanction, in a specially marked manner, the baptism of the new law. And, as toward the close of His life on earth, at the last supper, He made use of the figure of the old law to establish the thing itself, that is, the paschal feast to ordain the Blessed Eucharist; so now did He wish at the beginning of His public life to practically use the figurative baptism in order to ordain the sacramental baptism of the new law. The wondrous manifestation that took place at Christ's baptism is a true and striking picture of redeeming grace. He humbled Himself and was instantly exalted. So every man who follows His example and humbles himself in Christ, the same shall be in Christ exalted. The outward act of baptism was administered unto Christ, and at the same moment the heavens opened above Him. So does heaven open over every man at the moment he worthily receives the outward sign of a holy sacrament, whilst an invisible, supernatural grace overflows his soul meanwhile. Until then heaven was shut.

CHAPTER III

THE FORTY DAYS FAST IN THE DESERT. THE TEMPTATION

Matt. iv. 1-11; Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1-13

“AND Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And He was with the beasts, and He ate nothing. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. And the tempter coming

said to Him: If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, *Not in bread alone doth man live*, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him: If thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written: That He hath given His angels charge over Thee, that they keep Thee, and in their hands shall He bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

“Again the devil led Him into a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and the glory of them; and he said to Him: To Thee will I give all this power and the glory of them, for to me they are delivered, and to whom I will, I give them. If thou, therefore, wilt adore me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answering, said to him: *It is written the Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve*. And all the temptation being ended, the devil departed from Him for a time. And behold angels came and ministered to Him.”

Our blessed Lord's withdrawal into the solitude of the desert ought to teach us that we, too, when about to take any important step in life, or to assume any serious duty, should, as far as may be in our power, withdraw from the distractions of the world, and in silent retirement and prayer seriously prepare ourselves therefor. This has always been the practice of the best and holiest of men. During forty years, Moses prepared himself in the desert to become the saviour of his nation, and again for forty days in the wilds of Mount Sinai for the proper reception of the divine law, as given in the ten commandments. The Jews were detained in the desert for forty years that they might be suitably trained and disciplined to become the chosen people of God. Elias, too, remained in retirement for forty days to make himself worthy to receive the revelations from heaven. So our divine Saviour was pleased to pass forty days in the desert as a preparation for His apostolic mission.

But for what purpose did our blessed Lord permit the devil to approach His sacred person and present this three-fold temptation? The answer to this question shows us the tender love of our Saviour toward men, and awakens within our own bosoms the liveliest sentiments of gratitude and affection. In



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THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

the first place, He wishes, as the representative of sinful man, to become like to ourselves, taking upon Himself all our misery and woe, all our spiritual and bodily distempers. Secondly, He wishes to show us by His example how we may quietly, fearlessly, and resolutely, by God's grace, withstand the assaults of the devil, repel his attacks, and come off victoriously. Thirdly, Christ is the new Adam, and He wanted to offset by a glorious triumph the disastrous conflict between our first parents and the serpent-devil in paradise; to compensate for the first defeat by a splendid victory, and to break forever the power of the tempter.

CHAPTER IV

THE TESTIMONY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST—THE FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST

John i. 19-51

1. ST. JOHN GIVES TESTIMONY OF HIMSELF AND OF JESUS

“AND this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and levites to him, to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and did not deny, and he confessed: I am not the Christ. And they asked him: What then? Art thou Elias? And he said: I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered: No. They said therefore unto him: Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias.

“AND they that were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him and said to him: Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? John answered them, saying: I baptize with water; but there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not. The same is He that shall come after me, who is preferred before me: the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.

“These things were done in Bethania beyond the Jordan where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus

coming to him, and he said: Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said: After me, there cometh a man who is preferred before me: because He was before me. And I knew Him not, but that He may be made manifest in Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John gave testimony, saying: I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove from heaven, and He remained upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He who sent me to baptize with water, said to me: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, He it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God."

In his deep humility St. John calls himself the "voice of one crying in the wilderness," although he had a just right to the title of prophet; for Christ styles him a prophet and more than a prophet. He might, with justice, have proclaimed himself Elias, for Christ so designated him; and at his birth an angel had foretold he would go before Christ with the spirit and might of that prophet. He calls himself a voice, a passing breath; while he glorifies and exalts the Messiah, declaring Him, in the deeply significant and consoling words, "who taketh upon Himself the sin of the world," to be the promised Saviour of the world.

2. ANDREW AND SIMON PETER, PHILIP AND NATHANIEL COME TO JESUS

"The next day again John stood and two of his disciples. And beholding JESUS walking he saith: Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed JESUS. And JESUS turning, and seeing them following Him, saith to them: What seek you? Who said to Him: Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou? He saith to them: Come and see. They came, and saw where He abode, and they stayed with Him that day: now it was about the tenth hour. And Andrew the brother of Simon Peter was one of the two who had heard of John, and followed him. He findeth first his brother Simon, and saith to him: We have found the MESSIAS (which is, being interpreted, the CHRIST). And he brought him to JESUS. And JESUS looking upon him, said: Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas; which is interpreted, Peter. On the following day he would go forth into Galilee,

and He findeth Philip. And JESUS saith to him: Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael and saith to him: We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, JESUS, the son of Joseph of Nazareth. And Nathanael said to him: Can anything of good come from Nazareth? Philip saith to him: Come and see. JESUS saw Nathanael coming to Him, and He saith of him: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. Nathanael saith to Him: Whence knowest thou me? JESUS answered and said to him: Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered Him, and said: Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel. JESUS answered, and said to him: Because I said unto thee: I saw thee under the fig-tree, thou believest: greater things than these shalt thou see. And he saith to him: Amen, amen I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Among the many disciples who had gathered about St. John the Baptist, these five who were the first to unite themselves with Jesus Christ, deserve our attention. They were Andrew, John, Simon, whom our Lord surnamed Peter or Rock, Philip, and Nathanael. The last, in the opinion of the learned writers of the Church, was afterward raised to the apostleship under the name of Bartholomew.

CHAPTER V

JESUS AT THE WEDDING-FESTIVAL IN CANA OF GALILEE

John ii. 1-12

ON THE third day after our Lord had left Bethania for Galilee, "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is it to Me and to thee?

My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them: Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief-steward of the feast, and they carried it. And when the chief-steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew, who had drawn the water, the chief-steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now.

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee: and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capharnaum, He and His mother, and His brethren and His disciples; and they remained there not many days.”

At first sight, the conduct of Jesus toward His mother seems harsh and unkind. “Woman, what is it to Me and to thee?” Are not these words unkind, coming from the lips of one who had hitherto treated His mother with the tenderest and most respectful consideration? But let us properly understand the true sense and meaning of these words. To perform a miracle is essentially the province of the Son of God, not of the Son of Man; that is, Christ effected the miracle by virtue of His divine nature and not by that of His human nature. He acted as God. Therefore, He addresses His mother, not as a son to a mother, but as God to His creature—to a woman, whom, at the same time, He teaches that, if He perform the miracle sought for, He will do so, not as her son, but as her God. Yet, almost at the same moment that this lesson is given to His mother, her gentle request is granted. Mary knew this would be the case, and confidently directed the servants: “Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.”

The holy evangelist St. John concludes his account of this miracle at Cana with the words: “This *beginning* of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee,” hence there were other miracles performed subsequently; “and manifested His glory.” This was the motive of the miracle; “and His disciples believed in Him;” here we see the utility of the miracle.

Who can tell the number of Christ's miracles? He wrought them in the spirit-world, in the heavenly bodies, in men, and in the senseless beasts of the fields. He summoned angels to wait upon Him, expelled devils, darkened the sun, stayed the storm, calmed the angry billow, changed water into wine, healed the sick, converted sinners, rent the rocks, opened the grave, and called the dead to life.

What was Jesus' motive in performing these astounding miracles? They "manifested His glory" and showed Him to be the Son of God. For, what is a miracle? A miracle is an effect exceeding the simple and ordinary powers of nature, and which, therefore, cannot be caused by any creature, whether man, angel, or devil, of his own individual power. It is an act of divine omnipotence. The prophets of the old law, it is true, performed miracles, not indeed by their own individual power, but, as they always humbly admitted, by the power of God. Christ wrought His miracles by virtue of His own divine inherent strength, as He assures us in His own words: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth life: so the Son also giveth life to whom He will" (*John* v. 21). Every miracle, therefore, is a manifestation of divine glory and power, and an undeniable, because divine, testimony to the veracity of Him who performs it, and a proof of the truth of His teachings.

Because Jesus did these miracles before His disciples, "they believed in Him." Here we have the utility of miracles, namely, to confirm in our hearts a belief in Christ. How could the doctrines of Christianity, presenting as they do impenetrable mysteries to the enfeebled intellect, and waging a bitter war against human passions, have fought their way to the acceptance of men, had they not been confirmed before the eyes of the world by the undoubted miracles of the Teacher? As St. Augustine happily remarks: "This acceptance of Christ's teachings by men who are wedded to unbelief, error, and vice, is the greatest miracle of all."

II

HISTORY OF JESUS, FROM THE FIRST PASSOVER AFTER HIS BAPTISM IN THE JORDAN TO HIS SECOND PASSOVER

CHAPTER VI

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER IN JERUSALEM—HE DRIVES THE BUYERS AND SELLERS OUT OF THE TEMPLE, ETC.

Matt. xiv. 3-5; Mark vi. 17-20; Luke iii. 19, 20; John ii. 13-15; i. 36

1. JESUS EXPELS THE DEALERS FROM THE TEMPLE

UNLAWFUL and unholy practices among the Jews always met with stern rebuke and condemnation from Christ. "And the Pasch of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem: And He found in the temple them that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made as it were a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out and the tables He overthrew. And to them that sold doves, He said: Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic. And His disciples remembered that it was written: The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up."

2. HE FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION. THE PROPHECIES OF JESUS

"The Jews therefore answered and said to Him: What sign dost thou show unto us, seeing thou dost these things. Jesus answered and said to them: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said: Six and forty years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou raise it up in three days? But He spoke of the temple of His body. When therefore He was risen again from the dead, His disciples remembered, that He had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had said. Now when He was at Jerusalem at the Pasch, upon the festival-day, many believed in His name, seeing His signs, which He did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men. And because He needed not that any

should give testimony of man: for He knew what was in man.”

As Christ Himself hints, the above words concerning the destruction and rebuilding of the temple, are a prediction of His own death and of His resurrection on the third day. During the three years of His ministry He uttered several such prophecies. He foretold the circumstances of His death, the denial of Peter, the treachery of Judas, the sufferings of the apostles, Peter's crucifixion, the future history of the Church, and the destruction of Jerusalem; in all of which events His predictions were verified to the letter. They are, therefore, like His miracles, a shining confirmation of His teachings; for, as the miracles are a manifestation of His omnipotence, His prophecies are a manifestation of His omniscience.

3. JESUS AND NICODEMUS

“And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him: Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God, for no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him. Jesus answered, and said to him: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith to Him: How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again? Jesus answered: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Wonder not that I said to thee: you must be born again. The Spirit breatheth where he will: and thou hearest his voice, but thou knowest not whence he cometh or whither he goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered, and said to Him: How can these things be done? Jesus answered, and said to him: Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things? Amen, amen I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony. If I have spoken to you earthly things, and you believe me not: how will you believe if I shall speak to you heavenly things? And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the

desert; so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent not His Son into the world, to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him. He that believeth in Him is not judged: but He that doth not believe, is already judged: because He believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment: because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light: for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved: But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God.''

The learned Nicodemus thirsted for information, and yet he sought at the lips of Jesus only human knowledge; for he looked upon Him simply as a distinguished and clever teacher of novel doctrines. But Jesus showed him that in the new kingdom of God upon earth, knowledge is not to be the chief requisite, but rather the complete regeneration of man in Christ—the transformation and elevation of the mere natural man into a supernatural being, by the merits of Christ imparted in the sacrament of baptism. Nicodemus hears the words, but does not fully comprehend the depth of their meaning. Still he accepts them with docility, treasures them up in his soul, and after leaving Christ, meditates upon them more and more seriously, till little by little their import becomes more clear, and faith, hope, and charity begin to take root in his soul. St. John the Evangelist beautifully portrays to us the progress in spirituality made by this honest man who, but two years later, at the feast of the tabernacles, when the priests and the Pharisees wished to condemn Jesus, became His defender, and in presence of the whole council demanded whether the law condemned a man without being heard, and before it was known who he was and wherein he had transgressed. Although this was but an imperfect and timid advance toward the defence of Christ, Nicodemus was nevertheless rewarded by God. From this hour his faith became stronger, so that after the death of Jesus he threw aside all hesitation, and by his public and voluntary assistance at the burial of Christ, gave a touching and bold testimony in behalf



Martin Feuerstein

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OUR LORD'S FIRST MIRACLE, AT THE WEDDING-FEAST AT CANA

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of the Redeemer. The Church has placed him among her saints; for tradition tells us that the Pharisees and Jewish priests condemned him as a follower of the Crucified, dismissed him from the council, pronounced sentence of banishment upon him, and expelled him from Jerusalem.

4. REITERATED TESTIMONY OF JOHN IN FAVOR OF JESUS

“After these things, Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea:¹ and there He abode with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Ennon near Salim: because there was much water there, and they came and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. And there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews concerning purification: And they came to John and said to him: Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold He baptizeth and all men come to Him. John answered, and said: A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven. You yourselves do bear me witness, that I said I am not Christ: but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom’s voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all. He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh. He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what He hath seen, and heard, that He testifieth: and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received His testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God doth not give the spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son: and He hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting: but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

St. John, filled with the Spirit of God, sees in spirit the whole work of Christ. He beholds mankind, so long estranged from its God, united to Him once more by Christ in the closest and most sacred relations; he sees the world in harmony with heaven, the creature reconciled with its Creator. He himself is but the friend who leads the bride to the bridegroom, or

¹That is, from the city of Jerusalem into the surrounding country.

who prepares mankind for its Saviour. His duties being over when the bridegroom has come, he steps humbly aside, and is not troubled when his jealous disciples complain that many come to Jesus to be baptized. He stands before us a perfect model of that charming humility, which, knowing its proper place and field of duty, is neither envious nor jealous.

5. IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN

“But Herod the tetrarch, when he was reproved by John on account of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and of all the evil things which Herod did, also added this to all the rest, that he sent and apprehended John and bound him and put him into prison. For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife. Now Herodias laid snares for him and was desirous to put him to death. And when Herod would have put him to death, he feared the people, because they esteemed him as a prophet, and he feared John, knowing him to be a holy and a just man: and he kept him, and having heard him, did many things and gave ear to him willingly.”

Whilst John, a poor, defenceless captive in chains, bravely rebuked the royal adulterer, Herod, telling him that it is not allowed even to him to transgress the law, the latter, although a mighty king, fears and trembles. He is afraid of Herodias, he fears the people, fears the Baptist himself. How explain this contrast? John feels strong in the Lord his God, and in the calm consciousness of duties faithfully discharged. Herod quails before the reproaches of his own guilty conscience.

CHAPTER VII

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT JACOB’S WELL

John iv. 1-42

“When Jesus therefore understood that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus maketh more disciples and baptizeth more than John (though Jesus *himself* did not baptize, but his disciples) He left Judea, and went again into Galilee; and He

was of necessity to pass through Samaria. He cometh, therefore, to a city of Samaria which is called Sichar: near the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well. It was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith to her: Give me to drink. For His disciples were gone into the city to buy meats. Then that Samaritan woman saith to Him: How dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman? For the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans. Jesus answered, and said to her: If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink: thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water. The woman saith to Him: Sir, thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep? from whence then hast thou living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered, and said to her: Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again: but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever: But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting. The woman saith to him: Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst: nor come hither to draw. Jesus saith to her: Go, call thy husband and come hither. The woman answered and said: I have no husband. Jesus said to her: Thou hast said well, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband: this thou hast said truly. The woman saith to Him: Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers adored on this mountain, and you say, that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore. Jesus saith to her: Woman, believe Me, that the hour cometh, when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem adore the Father. You adore that which you know not: we adore that which we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore Him. God is a spirit: and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith to Him: I know that the Messiah cometh (who is called Christ); therefore when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus saith to her: I am He, who am speaking with thee."

Hardly had Jesus proved Himself to be a prophet by telling her the secret of her heart, when she turns her mind to serving God and saving her soul. She utters not a syllable to exculpate herself from the charges with which she is reproached. Hence she is endowed with such grace, and receives such glorious revelations from the lips of the divine Teacher.

“And immediately His disciples came: and they wondered that He talked with the woman. Yet no man said: What seekest thou, or why talkest thou with her? The woman therefore left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men there: Come, and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done: Is not He the Christ? They went therefore out of the city and came unto Him. In the mean time the disciples prayed Him, saying: Rabbi, eat. But He said to them: I have meat to eat which you know not. The disciples therefore said one to another: Hath any man brought Him to eat? Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work. Do not you say, there are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh? Behold I say to you: Lift up your eyes and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting: that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For in this is the saying true: that it is one man that soweth, and it is another that reapeth. I have sent you to reap that in which you did not labor: others have labored, and you have entered into their labors. Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him, for the word of the woman giving testimony: He told me all things whatsoever I have done. So when the Samaritans were come to Him, they desired Him that He would tarry there. And He abode there two days. And many more believed in Him because of His own word. And they said to the woman: We now believe, not for thy saying: for we ourselves have heard Him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

Consider how these despised, rejected, semi-pagan Samaritans are called to salvation in Christ. See how a sinful woman is made worthy to be one of the first to hear from the Redeemer's own lips the mysteries of God's kingdom. Here we recognize in Jesus, the faithful shepherd who had come to find what was lost; the merciful Saviour come to seek

sinners; the loving Mediator holding forth His arms to receive and forgive us. Two short days sufficed to establish so firm a faith in the hearts of the Samaritans, that they acknowledged Christ to be the Messiah and the Saviour of the world. The heart of Jesus is filled with joy, as He foretells to His disciples the abundant harvests among the heathens, amid whom they will one day be called to labor, and to reap the fruit of the mysterious seed which He will sow by virtue of His saving blood, shed upon the cross. With delight He foresees how the temple of Sion will expand, miraculously extending itself into one vast spiritual edifice, whose glorious vaults will give shelter to all nations, forming a spiritual temple where Jews and Gentiles will be united in Christ under the same law of grace and truth.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST SERMON OF JESUS. HE HEALS THE CENTURION'S SON. REPEATS HIS CALLING OF PETER, ANDREW, AND JACOB. MIRACULOUS CURES

Matt. iv. 12-25; viii. 14-17; Mark i. 14-39; Luke iv. 14-44; John iv. 43-54

1. JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT NAZARETH

“Now after two days, when Jesus had heard that John was delivered up, He came and returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. And when He was come into Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He had done in Jerusalem on the festival-day, for they also went to the festival-day. From that time Jesus began to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, and to say: The time is accomplished and the kingdom of God is at hand: do penance, and believe the gospel. And the fame of Him went out through the whole country, and He taught in their synagogues and was magnified by all. And He came to Nazareth, where He was brought up: and He went into the synagogue according to His custom on the Sabbath day, and He rose up to read. And the book of Isaias the prophet was delivered unto Him. And as He unfolded the book, He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me:

wherefore He hath anointed me, to preach the gospel to the poor He hath sent me, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward. And when He had folded the book, He restored it to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them: This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears. And all gave testimony to Him: and they wondered at the words of grace that proceedeth from His mouth, and they said: Is not this the son of Joseph? And He said to them: Doubtless you will say to Me this similitude: Physician, heal thyself: as great things as we have heard done in Capharnaum, do also here in thy own country. And He said: Amen I say to you, that no prophet is accepted in his own country. In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six months: when there was a great famine throughout all the earth: and to none of them was Elias sent, but to Sarepta of Sidon, to a widow woman. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet: and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, hearing these things, were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust him out of the city: and they brought him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them, went his way."

There were two causes for this malicious and unkind behaviour of the Nazarenes toward the Son of man. First, their worldly notions of the Messiah, whom they had hoped to find a mighty king, surrounded with pomp and glory, would not permit them to recognize Him in a poor carpenter's son; this miserable and dangerous delusion was common to most of the people of Israel. In the second place, the Nazarenes were jealous of their own fellow-citizen, and wanted to strip Him of the honor and distinguished reputation which He had acquired in other places.

2. HE SOJOURNS AT CAPHARNAUM

"And leaving the city Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capharnaum on the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and of Nephthalim; that it might be fulfilled which was said by

Isaias the prophet: Land of Zabulon and land of Nephthalim, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people that sat in darkness hath seen great light: and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death, light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Capharnaum, the chief theater of our dear Lord's active ministry, was the largest, wealthiest, and most flourishing town in Galilee. It was situated on the sea of Galilee, at the mouth of the river Jordan. This section of the country was called Upper Galilee, or the Galilee of the heathens; for it bordered on Phœnicia and was the home of many pagans. Nazareth was situated in Lower Galilee.

THE RULER'S SON

"He came again therefore into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum. He having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to Him, and prayed Him to come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Jesus therefore said to Him: Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not. The ruler saith to Him: Lord, come down before that my son die. Jesus saith to him: Go thy way, thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him: and they brought word, saying that his son lived. He asked therefore of them the hour, wherein he grew better. And they said to him: Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the same hour, that Jesus said to him: Thy son liveth: and himself believed and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judea into Galilee."

Here observe the miraculous power of the word of Christ. A mere word, a gentle motion of His lips, a simple breath, and the sick man, languishing in his bed miles away, is restored to health by virtue of this single word.

4. PETER AND ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN

"And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a

net into the sea (for they were fishers). And He saith to them: Come ye after Me and I will make you to be fishers of men. And they immediately leaving their nets, followed Him. And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and He called them. And they forthwith left their nets and father and his hired men and followed Him."

Although Peter, John, and Andrew had previously obeyed the invitation of Christ to follow Him, they had not remained with Him continuously, till from the time of their formal appointment to the apostleship. Hitherto they came and went according to the impulse of the Spirit and the orders of Jesus.

5. THE DEMONIAK HEALED IN THE SYNAGOGUE

"And they enter into Capharnaum: and forthwith upon the Sabbath days going into the synagogue, He taught them. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the Scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit: and he cried out, with a loud voice, saying: What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth: art thou come to destroy us? I know who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus threatened him, saying: Speak no more and go out of the man. And the unclean spirit tearing him, and crying out with a loud voice, when he had thrown him into the midst, went out of him and hurt him not at all. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying: What thing is this? what is this new doctrine? for with authority and power He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him. And the fame of Him was spread forthwith into all the country of Galilee."

It is not to be wondered at that the number of persons possessed by the devil was so large at the time of our Lord's stay upon earth. Hell, feeling conscious that its reign was drawing to a close, rallied its forces to wage bitter war against the divine-human conqueror. So it does to this day in heathen lands when Christianity makes its first appearance. A wise God permitted this powerless obstinacy of unclean spirits, in order, on the one hand, to make men feel the degradation brought on them by sin, and again to glorify the Son of man and to exhibit to the world His power over hell.

6. ST. PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW CURED

“And immediately going out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. And Simon's wife's mother lay in a fit of fever: and forthwith they tell Him of her. And coming to her, and standing over her, He commanded the fever, and lifted her up, taking her by the hand; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And when it was evening, after sunset, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them to Him. But He laying His hands on every one of them, healed them. And all the city was gathered at the door. And the devils went out from many that were possessed, crying out and saying: Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, He suffered them not to speak, because they knew that He was Christ. That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaias the prophet, saying: He took our infirmities: and bore our diseases.”

7. JESUS TRAVERSES GALILEE, TEACHING AND HEALING THE SICK

“And when it was day, going out very early, He went into a desert place and there He prayed: and the multitudes sought Him, and came unto Him: and stayed Him that He should not depart from them. And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. And when they had found Him, they said to Him: All seek for Thee. And He saith to them: Let us go into the neighboring towns and cities that I may preach there also: for to this purpose am I come. And the multitudes sought Him, and came unto Him; and they stayed Him that He should not depart from them. And He said to them: To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God; for therefore am I sent. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom: and healing all manner of sickness and every infirmity, among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria, and they presented to Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and such as were possessed by devils, and lunatics, and those that had the palsy, and He cured them: And much people followed Him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and from Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.”

Have we not here a plain and comforting evidence that

Christ came to break the dominion of sin, and consequently of grief and misery? to found a kingdom where no tear should be shed? For what is sickness, what affliction and misery, what the ills of the flesh and trouble of soul, but the consequences of sin? Nothing is clearer and more true. But the devil, who envies man's welfare in soul and body, endeavors to blind him to the truth.

CHAPTER IX

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

Luke v. 1-11

“AND it came to pass that when the multitudes pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Genesareth. And He saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And going up into one of the ships that was Simon's, He desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting, He taught the multitudes out of the ship.

“Now when He had ceased to speak, He said to Simon: Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering, said to Him: Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing: but at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net broke. And they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking.

“Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. And Jesus saith to Simon: Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And having brought their ships to land, leaving all things, they followed Him.”

The Saviour effected, through the hands of His apostle, a miraculous draught of fishes, on two different occasions—the

present one, and again after His resurrection. The apostles who had been called and chosen to be fishers of men, were to understand from this miracle, how they were one day to cast, in the name of Jesus, the net of the divine word and gather in unnumbered immortal souls to the kingdom of heaven. They were not learned, nor powerful, nor important in the eyes of men, but simple fishermen unable to effect anything by their own strength. In the wonderful draught of fishes their divine Master foreshadowed before them what they would, in the future, accomplish by virtue of His name and with His blessing. To confirm them in this happy dependence upon the power of His blessing, He repeats this prophetic sign in a similar manner, that is, by another draught of fishes, just shortly before His ascension into heaven. Why was this vast draught effected through the hands of Peter? Jesus wished to declare openly His preference for Peter, to manifest His glorious privilege as prince of the apostles, and to show, that from Peter's bark, the Roman Catholic Church, He Himself should in all ages preach infallible truth.

CHAPTER X

THE PARALYTIC. THE CALL OF MATTHEW. ON FASTING

Matt. ix. 1-17; Mark ii. 1-22; Luke v. 17-39

1. THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC

“AND entering into a boat, Jesus passed over the water, and came into His own city, and a great multitude assembled together unto Him and received Him. And He again, after some days, entered Capharnaum. And it came to pass on a certain day, it being heard that He was in the house, many came together, so that there was no room, not even at the door, as He sat teaching. And the Pharisees and the doctors of the law were sitting by who had come out of every town of Galilee, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem. And He spoke to them the word of God, and the power of the Lord was to heal them.

“And behold, some men brought a man who was sick of the palsy, lying in a bed carried by four, and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him: and when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went up upon the roof, and they uncovered the roof where He was and opening it through the tiles, they let down the bed wherein the man sick of the palsy lay, into the midst before Jesus, who having seen their faith, said to him: Be of good courage, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.

“And there were some of the Scribes sitting there, and thinking in their hearts: Why doth this man speak thus? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only? Which Jesus presently knowing in His spirit, that they so thought within themselves, said to them: Why think you these evil things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy: Thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say: Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee, Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house. And immediately he arose: and taking up his bed, went his way in the sight of all, so that all wondered, and glorified God, that gave such power to men, saying: We never saw the like. And the multitudes seeing it, feared, and glorified God.”

Jesus Christ, in this cure of the paralytic, shows us plainly that, when afflicted with bodily infirmity, our first and chief care should be to purify and heal our souls. Summon, therefore, without delay the priest of the Church, Christ's representative, that he may pronounce over your soul the absolving words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee”—those awful but consoling words, which, if coming from the lips of any one but of him to whom Christ said: “Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them,” would be indeed a dire blasphemy.

2. JESUS CALLS MATTHEW. EATS WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

“And He went forth again to the sea side: and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. And when He was passing by, He saw a publican named Levi Matthew, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith to him: Follow me. And rising up, and leaving all things,

he followed Him. And Levi made a great feast in his own house. And it came to pass, that as He sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat down together with Jesus and His disciples: for they were many, who also followed Him. And the Scribes and the Pharisees seeing that He ate with publicans and sinners, said to His disciples: Why doth your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners? Jesus hearing this, answering, saith to them: They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. For I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance."

The publicans were the most despised class among the Jews; for they were charged with the greatest injustice in collecting the revenues for the Roman Government, a power beneath whose sway and heavy exactions that people groaned with deep and ill-concealed heartburnings. The Scribes and Pharisees condemned these publicans rashly and without sincerity, for their faults were public, while their own, although hidden from public gaze, were equally reprehensible. How many Christians act in a similar manner! We condemn others, and consider ourselves honest, just, and law-abiding; by our uncharitable judgments of our neighbors, we become guilty of grievous sin.

3. FASTING. THE NEW PATCH ON THE OLD GARMENT

"And the disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast, and coming, they said to Jesus: Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees in like manner: but thine eat and drink? To whom He said: Can you make the children of the bridegroom fast. can the children of the bridegroom mourn whilst the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then shall they fast in those days. As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they can not fast. And He spoke also a similitude to them: That no man putteth a piece of raw cloth from a new garment on an old garment: otherwise he both rendeth the new, and the piece taken from the new agreeth not with the old, and there is made a greater rent. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: otherwise the new wine will break the bottles, and it will be spilled and the bottles will be lost: But new wine must be put into new bottles: and both are

preserved. And no man drinking old wine, hath presently a mind to new, for he saith: 'The old is better.'"

What a wise, prudent, and gentle considerateness our blessed Master here displays! The time would come soon enough when His disciples would be, not partially, but completely, strengthened and regenerated by the mystery of Pentecost. He will not, then, discourage or embarrass prematurely these simple children of Galilee, with external practices of piety and mortification. As soon as the Holy Ghost shall have transformed wholly their spiritual being, then exterior works of piety, which, at present, would be of little meaning or value, will follow of themselves.

III

LIFE OF JESUS, FROM HIS SECOND PASSOVER AFTER HIS BAPTISM TILL HIS THIRD FEAST OF THE PASSOVER

CHAPTER XI

THE SICK MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHSAIDA. JESUS ASSERTS HIS DIVINITY

John v. 1-47

1. JESUS CURES THE CRIPPLE

"AFTER these things was a festival day of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem a pond called Probatika, which in Hebrew is named Bethsaida, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the moving of the water. And an Angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond, and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond after the motion of the water, was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under. And

there was a certain man there, that had been eight-and-thirty years under his infirmity. Him when Jesus had seen lying, and knew that he had been now a long time, He saith to him: Wilt thou be made whole? The infirm man answered him: Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond: for whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me. Jesus saith to him: Arise, take up thy bed and walk: And immediately the man was made whole: and he took up his bed and walked. And it was the Sabbath that day. The Jews therefore said to Him that was healed: It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed. He answered them: He that made me whole, He said to me: Take up thy bed and walk. They asked him therefore: Who is that man who said to thee: Take up thy bed and walk? But he that was healed knew not who it was; for Jesus went aside from the multitude standing in the place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and saith to him: Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee. The man went his way and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole. Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, because He did these things on the Sabbath.”

These hypocritical Jews will see nothing here but the violation of the Sabbath. They will not recognize the excessive benevolence of the Saviour toward this poor sufferer whom they had for years neglected; they will not discern the power by which, in an instant, he is so completely restored that he can lift with a strong arm the very bed to which he had been chained for years; they do not see the joy of the man on finding himself rescued from the bondage of sickness and restored to the company of his friends. Thus we recognize the Pharisees in every age, even in our own. They shut their eyes to everything good, great, and useful effected during many centuries, by the Church, through her faithful servants, and find out only the real or imaginary defects.

2. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

“But Jesus answered them: My Father worketh until now, and I work. Hereupon therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him: because He did not only break the Sabbath, but also said God was His Father, making Himself equal to God. Then Jesus answered and said to them: Amen, amen, I say unto

you: the Son can not do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doth, these also the Son doth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things which Himself doth: and greater works than these will He shew Him, that you may wonder. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth life: so the Son also giveth life to whom He will. For neither doth the Father judge any man: but hath given all judgment to the Son; that all men may honor the Son, as they honor the Father: He who honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father, who hath sent Him. Amen, amen, I say unto you, that he who heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life everlasting, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say unto you, that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself: so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself: And He hath given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man. Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God: And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment. I can not of Myself do any thing. As I hear, so I judge; and My judgment is just: because I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of Me: and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of Me is true. You sent to John: and he gave testimony to the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but I say these things that you may be saved. He was a burning and a shining light. And you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater testimony than that of John. For the works which the Father hath given Me to perfect: the works themselves, which I do, give testimony of Me, that the Father hath sent Me: And the Father Himself who hath sent Me, hath given testimony of Me: neither have you heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape: And you have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him you believe not. Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting: and the same are they that give testimony of Me: And you will not come to Me that you may have life. I receive not glory from



Martin Feuerstein

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men. But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in the name of My Father, and you receive Me not: if another shall come in His own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive glory one from another: and the glory which is from God alone, you do not seek? Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, Moses, in whom you trust. For if you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe Me also: for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings: how will you believe My words?"

As Son of God, Jesus exists and works with the eternal Father, distinct indeed in His divine personality but unseparated and inseparable from the Father in the divine nature, that is, in omnipotence, wisdom, and love, all of which He, as His only begotten Son, receives from Him from all eternity. To Him, as Son of man, is given not only power over the elements of nature, over the sick, and over evil spirits, but a still higher, yes, the highest power, to call the dead to life and to hold the general judgment. And, as Son of man, He will not only summon the dead to life for judgment, but He will even now call many from their coffins and graves, as a foreshadowing of the general resurrection at the end of the world.

The right of holding the last judgment belongs to the Son of man, on several grounds. In the first place, it is becoming that *he* should judge the human race who has actually measured its length and breadth, and experienced all the trials and temptations of human life. In the second place, He who, in His sacred humanity, offered the atoning sacrifice, should also, in His humanity, sit in judgment over those who have availed themselves of His sacrifice, or rejected it. In the third place, the deep abasement and forbearance undergone by the Son of man requires to be counterbalanced by a corresponding exaltation and glorification as Judge of the world. Of the justice of this Judge no one need have any apprehensions, because the Son of man will then, as He always does, act in perfect harmony with the Godhead. On that great and dreadful day all men without exception will be compelled to acknowledge Him as the Son of the living God. Those who now refuse Him homage will recognize Him to their confusion; those who now believe in Him, to their salvation.

CHAPTER XII

CHRIST'S DISCIPLES PLUCK EARS OF CORN ON
THE SABBATH. JESUS CURES SEVERAL
SICK PERSONS

Matt. xii. 1-21; Mark ii. 23-28; Luke vi. 1-11

1. JESUS DEFENDS HIS DISCIPLES. OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY

“AT THAT time, Jesus went through the corn-fields, on the second-first Sabbath: and His disciples being hungry, began to pluck the ears, and to eat, rubbing them in their hands. And the Pharisees seeing them, said to Him: Behold Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath-days. Why do ye that which is not lawful on the Sabbath-days? But He said to them: Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him: How he entered into the house of God, under Abiathar, the high-priest, and did eat the loaves of proposition, and gave to them that were with him, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for them that were with him, but for the priests only? Or have ye not read in the law, that on the Sabbath-days the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are without blame? But I tell you that there is here a greater than the temple. The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. And if you knew what this meaneth: ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;’ you would never have condemned the innocent: For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

There is more latitude given on the Sabbath to the Christian than was permitted to the Jews. All that is required to be done for the honor of God, for the love of our neighbor, or for our own necessities, is permitted; as for example, the decoration of altars, the care of the sick, domestic requirements, especially among the poor. But we should be zealous and faithful to the day's spiritual sanctification by punctual attendance at public worship, by the reception of the sacraments, increased prayer, and works of mercy.

2. JESUS HEALS THE WITHERED HAND ON THE SABBATH

“It came to pass, also, on another Sabbath-day that Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. There was a man there whose right hand was withered. The Scribes and the Pharisees watched if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath; and they

asked Him: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? that they might thus find an accusation against Him. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand: Arise, and stand forth in the midst. And rising, he stood forth. Then Jesus said to the Pharisees: I ask you if it be lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy? But they held their peace. What man, He said to them, shall there be among you, that hath one sheep, and if the same fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not take hold on it and lift it up? How much better is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath days. Then looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts, Jesus saith to the man: Stretch forth thy hand. He stretched it forth, and his hand was restored to health even as the other."

3. OTHER MIRACLES

"But the Pharisees were filled with madness, and going out, they immediately made a consultation with the Herodians, how they might destroy Jesus. But He knowing it, retired with His disciples to the sea. A great multitude followed Him from Galilee and Judea, from Jerusalem, from Idumea, from beyond the Jordan: and also a great multitude from about Tyre and Sidon, hearing the things which He did, came to Him. Then Jesus spoke to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him, because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. For He healed many, so that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many had evils. The unclean spirits when they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying: Thou art the Son of God."

CHAPTER XIII

CHRIST CALLS THE TWELVE APOSTLES AND IMPARTS TO THEM SALUTARY ADMONITIONS AND INSTRUCTION

Matt. x. 1-42; Mark iii. 13-19; vi. 7-13; Luke vi. 12-16; ix. 1-6

1. THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES. THE CHOSEN TWELVE

"IT CAME to pass in those days that Jesus went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the

prayer of God. When day was come He called unto Him His disciples, and they came to Him. He chose twelve of them whom He would Himself, that should be with Him, and that He might send them to preach. He named them apostles, and He gave them the power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils. The names of the twelve are these: Simon whom He surnamed Peter, James the son of Zebedee, John the brother of James, whom He named Boanerges, which is the sons of thunder, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew the publican, Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Jude his brother named Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, who is called Zelotes, and Judas Iscariot who was the traitor."

In many places throughout the Holy Scriptures we find several striking figures of these twelve apostles. Like the twelve sons of Jacob, who were the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, the apostles are the twelve fathers of the Christian family. They are the twelve messengers sent by God to spiritualize the world, as the twelve spies were sent by Moses into the land of Canaan. They are the twelve jewels in the breast-plate of the high-priest, that is, the twelve chosen men who have drawn wisdom and love directly from the bosom of Jesus the great high-priest. They are the twelve stars in the crown of glory which illumines the brow of the woman described by St. John in the Apocalypse, and who represents Christ's spouse, the Church. They are the twelve precious stones of jasper in the foundations of the celestial city, the twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, from which new spiritual life flows in torrents over all the world.

2. EXHORTATIONS TO THE APOSTLES. THE DUTIES OF PRIESTS. THE DUTIES OF THE LAITY TOWARD THEIR CLERGY

"These twelve Jesus sent: commanding them, saying: Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles, and into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And going preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have you received, freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the workmen is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy: and there abide till you go thence. And when

you come into the house, salute it, saying: Peace be to this house. And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it, but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, going forth out of that house or city, shake off even the dust from your feet for a testimony against them. Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues: And you shall be brought before governors, and before kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you. The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall put them to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake: but He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved. And when they shall persecute you in this city, flee unto another. Amen I say to you, you shall not finish all the cities of Israel, till the Son of man come. The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord; it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master: and the servant as his lord. If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household? Therefore fear them not; for nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid, that shall not be known. That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the house-tops. And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: better are you than many sparrows. Every one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth.

I came not to send peace, but the sword; for I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for Me, shall find it. He that receiveth you, receiveth Me: and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet: and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple: amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

Like to a good general who, on the evening before the battle, calls his trusty officers about him, gives them the password, explains the plan of battle, and assigns to each one his post of duty in the coming contest; so does the divine Master assemble His apostles to prepare them, to teach them, and to encourage them. For soon will begin the severest and most sanguinary, but, at the same time, the most important and glorious conflict—that conflict destined to put an end to the deceptive and dishonorable peace of sin, and which will result in real, God-promised, comforting peace to the children of God. The empire to be overthrown has grown strong and immeasurably large under the reign and protection of Lucifer. Pagan superstition, pharisaical pride, sensuality, cruelty, human passions, and the hordes of hell, are his satellites. Christ wishes to conquer this powerful enemy, to wrench his prey from his grasp, and to build on the ruins of his empire a new kingdom, a kingdom of love, truth, and justice. Truly, so great, so momentous, and so glorious a conflict, the world never saw before and will not see again till judgment-day.

The twelve apostles are the twelve generals of the divine King. What a glorious commission He bestows not only upon them, but also upon their successors in the holy strife, the bishops and priests. He first commands poverty, simplicity, and frugality. Poverty must be of great importance for an apostle; it must be the secret of obtaining God's blessing and consequent success in the ministry, since Christ, who Himself

was so poor as not to have a place to lay His head, commends its observance thus early and forcibly to the generals of His army. His second admonition is to practice charity, which is gentle, does good, and scatters blessings even in the house of an enemy. His third admonition is to fortitude; fearing not the great and influential, but preaching firmness where firmness can be useful or is necessary. Fourthly, He recommends prudence, which yields and flies where to persevere would be dangerous. Fifthly, He recommends patience in privations, remembering the abasement of their divine Master. The sixth recommendation is to unbounded dependence in Him, who cares with the unceasing vigilance of a father for the smallest among His creatures, and who will not forsake His chosen servants, the leaders in the holy conflict. The seventh and last watchword is a joyful hope for the crown of victory with which the divine Commander will in the day of victorious triumph reward those who have stood faithfully to His standard, and have fearlessly proclaimed Him before men. Such are the orders of the divine-human Commander to His officers; such the ancient but ever new code of laws for Christian clergy of every rank.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matt. v., vi., vii.; Luke vi. 17-49

1. THE SERMON IN GENERAL. ASSENT TO ITS TEACHINGS SECURED BY THE PREACHER'S DISPLAY OF MIRACLE-POWER

MORE grateful to the ear of fallen man than the strains of sweetest music are the benignant words of Jesus in this Sermon on the Mount. No more sublime, sacred, or merciful words ever fell from mouth of preacher to soothe the soul of erring man. At times they are gentle and sweet as the softest tones of the lyre, and again they are grand, startling, and majestic, as the mingled clash of trumpet and thunder on Mount Sinai. The Sermon on the Mount reveals to us the inmost recesses of the human soul, its priceless worth, the horror of its loss, the dread majesty of the Almighty, the

infinite mercy and benignity, the justness and the indulgence of our merciful Judge.

The Christian who follows its admonitions will be led up to the purest humanity, to the most exalted perfection of soul, to the most distinterested love of his neighbor, to the most sublime love for God, to true earthly happiness, and to heavenly bliss.

2. THE EIGHT BEATITUDES

“And coming down with His apostles, He stood in a plain place, and the company of His disciples, and a very great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and the sea coast both of Tyre and Sidon, who were come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases. And they that were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the multitude sought to touch Him: for virtue went out from Him, and healed all. And He lifting up His eyes on His disciples, said: Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

“And Jesus seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain, and when He was set down, His disciples came unto Him. And opening His mouth He taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven; for so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.”

What a beautiful, heart-winning introduction to His sermon! Surely, He who thus speaks can have come into the world for no other purpose but to re-unite heaven and earth, to restore man to his long-lost happiness. Hence Christ's

gospel must necessarily be directly opposed to that system of teaching which severed earth from heaven. Worldlings praise the rich, the great, and the powerful; but Jesus commends the lowly, the persecuted, the tearful poor.

Once again it is poverty that Christ first of all recommends to His disciples and to the multitude, as He did lately to His apostles. Poverty in spirit; that is, that holy spirit of poverty, consisting not so much in possessing nothing, but rather in having one's heart detached from earthly treasures, and in holding one's soul free from inordinate love of worldly goods, and in seeking after the imperishable wealth of truth, grace, and happiness in Christ. In this holy poverty, are found true freedom of soul, all real goodness, holiness, and contentment. Modesty, peacefulness, compassion, chastity of soul and body, hunger and thirst after justice, God-given sorrow for our own sins and for the faults of our neighbors, courage in persecution;—all these virtues spring from a faithful practice of the virtue of holy poverty.

3. THE FOUR WOES TO SINNERS IN WORLDLY PROSPERITY

According to the explicit teaching of St. Paul, avarice (which is directly opposed to holy poverty) is the source of all passionate contentions for the things of this world; it is the origin of every evil and misfortune. Hence the dreadful language of the divine Master:

“But woe to you that are rich: for you have your consolation.

“Woe to you that are filled: for you shall hunger.

“Woe to you that laugh now: for you shall mourn and weep.

“Woe to you when men shall bless you: for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets.”

4. THE SALT OF THE EARTH, AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Jesus now turning from the multitude of His disciples, directs His words to those apostles who were standing near Him, and whom He had specially appointed to heal the moral corruption of the world, to announce the glad tidings of salvation, to dispense God's grace in the sacraments, and thus become a leaven among men.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men. You

are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain can not be hid; neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

5. CHRIST UPHOLDS THE OLD LAW AND PERFECTS IT

Whilst admonishing the future prophets and teachers of the New Testament, Jesus Christ adverts to the ancient prophets, and to the old law especially. This law is not to be repealed nor destroyed, but rather developed, perfected, and sanctified. The ceremonial law, foretelling and prefiguring Christ, having now reached its fulfilment, ceased to be; but the moral law of the Old Testament finds and receives in Christ its new confirmation and sanction on the basis of love, as well as its explanation and its perfect completion.

6. RESPECT FOR OUR FELLOW-MEN

“Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled. He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you: that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca: shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool: shall be in danger of hell fire. If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee: leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift. Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him;¹ lest perhaps the

¹That is, whilst we are with the living; for if we die without reconciliation, we become amenable to the pains of purgatory, or even of hell.

adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing."

See how Christ gives to the most important relations of daily life an entirely new and perfect character, by securing to the individual higher honor and more personal dignity, than were required or secured in the Old Testament. The smallest offence is to be more strictly forbidden and more severely punished, as the Saviour explains by a parable, or comparison with the three grades of justice: the lower court consisting of twenty-three judges, the upper court with its seventy-two judges, and the court of hell.

7. THE SANCTITY AND INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE

"You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you: that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish rather than that thy whole body go into hell. And it hath been said: Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery."

Here our divine Teacher re-establishes and sanctifies the family in its very foundation, namely, in holy matrimony, and in matrimonial fidelity. Henceforth, lawful marriage is to be indissoluble. No power, whether temporal or spiritual, can ever again dissolve a properly contracted marriage. For all future time, married people are to understand that they are bound under pain of grievous sin, to strictly observe matrimonial fidelity, not only in act, but in word, thought, and look.

8. ON SWEARING AND ON SIMPLICITY IN SPEECH

"Again you have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not forswear thyself: but thou shalt perform thy

oaths to the Lord. But I say to you not to swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God: nor by the earth, for it is His foot-stool: nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil.”

In these edifying and instructive passages of His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord elevates and sanctifies business relations between man and man, by extolling and enjoining mutual honesty and confidence between them to such a laudable and happy extent, that the words, yes or no, may be sufficient, and all oaths unnecessary. True, owing to human imperfection, neither the judicial oath; nor, in case of necessity, and in truth, is any just oath forbidden.

9. LAW REGULATED BY LOVE

“You have heard that it hath been said: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other: and if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him: and whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two. Give to him that asketh of thee: and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away. Of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again: forgive and you shall be forgiven: give and it shall be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom. It is a more blessed thing to give rather than to receive. And as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner.”

In these words our blessed Master sanctifies Christian government or society, by elevating, purifying, and perfecting strict justice, which is its very corner-stone, and by inculcating upon His followers to sometimes forego their rights for peace sake, especially in affairs of minor importance; when such concession will not, to any grave extent, injure themselves or those depending upon them.

10. LOVE OF ENEMIES. SUPERNATURAL MOTIVES FOR CHRISTIAN LOVE

“You have heard that it hath been said: thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: love

your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathen this? And if ye do good to them who do good to you; what thanks are to you? for sinners also do this. And if ye lend to them of whom you hope to receive; what thanks are to you? for sinners also lend to sinners, for to receive as much. But love ye your enemies: do good, and lend, hoping for nothing thereby: and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the sons of the Highest, for He is kind to the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Be ye therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect."

We here discover our divine Saviour's desire to sanctify human society, by elevating and ennobling that bond which affects all men, namely, natural affection into supernatural love or charity, by directing it to the heavenly Father, by promising a supernatural reward for its observance, and by thus divesting it of that dross of selfishness which sometimes incrusts the gold of real love and obscures its brightness. Oh, if men would only adhere to the observance of these sound principles on which the Saviour founded His kingdom! How secure the individual would be, how united the family would be, how plain and easy every kind of business, how peaceful the commonwealth, how happy the whole human family in its every relation!

11. ALMS-GIVING

Our divine Teacher now passes on to the three principal works of Christian charity, namely, alms-giving, prayer, and fasting. He warns us, first of all, that these three works have value before God and merit the kingdom of heaven, only when they are done, not to elicit the praise of men, but out of love for God and with the hope of divine reward. For the foundation of all real good, is disinterested motive or purity of intention.

"Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an

alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men: Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth: That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee."

This reward will be given, not only on the last day, when, according to St. Paul, "the Lord will bring to light whatever is hidden in darkness, and lay open the secrets of our hearts, and every man will receive his reward from God." Even in this life, the Lord will bless your alms-giving and send it back, a thousandfold, in blessings to your soul and body, to your family, and to your substance; as countless examples and daily experience prove. How precious this gentle, hidden, and mysterious blessing which falls upon all good men who practise charity toward their needy brethren! If you have much, give abundantly. Be not stingy with your wealth. Alms-giving is an investment in the heavenly treasury, which will pay heavy interest. But if you have only a little, give of that little cheerfully, remembering how our Lord glorified the widow's mite at Jerusalem.

12. THE "OUR FATHER"

"And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee. And when you are praying speak not much, as the heathens; for they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them; for your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask Him. Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily supersubstantial bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen. For if you will forgive men their offences: your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences."

Our good and merciful Redeemer has given us a glorious

prayer; a prayer of touching simplicity, of sweetest expression, and deepest meaning; a prayer far surpassing the choicest effusions from the hearts of the holiest of saints. It is the Son of the living God who gave it to us, as a memorial to His beloved on earth. For nigh 2000 years, our ancestors in the faith have repeated it in prosperity and in adversity, in joy and sorrow; therefore it is a venerable memorial of our forefathers. The apostles, martyrs, fathers of the Church, the most illustrious princes of Christendom, philosophers and divines as well as the illiterate, rich and poor, have all repeated its simple and beautiful words. It is therefore a holy bond of union between Christians of all generations; a precious sign of Christian unity. Let us try to understand with what reverence, devotion, and gladness our hearts should be animated when we repeat the Lord's prayer.

Although our blessed Redeemer advises us to recite this and other similar prayers in the privacy of our rooms, we must not therefore conclude that He does not require us to be present at and to participate in public worship, and in those religious gatherings so frequently mentioned with approval both in the old and the new dispensations. We must do the one, and not neglect the other; and we must do both in a proper spirit and with true sincerity; not simply outwardly and with the lips only, but interiorly and with a vivid consciousness of God's sacred presence. Hence Christ warns us not to depend upon the multiplication of too many words when at our devotions. It is the *spirit* that quickeneth, the spirit of holy reverence, of childlike love, of unrestricted confidence and of entire dependence on God. It is only when animated with this spirit that the protracted prayers used by Christians have any value. We are exhorted to employ continued and frequent prayer, not only by the command of Christ, but especially by His example in the desert and on the mountain, as well as by the practice of the saints.

13. FASTING

“And when you fast be not as the hypocrites, sad; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.”

14. POVERTY IN SPIRIT. TRUST IN GOD

Again our blessed Master reverts to the subject of "poverty in spirit." Oh, how clearly and thoroughly He understands human nature, with all its weaknesses! How well He knows that man, although he will not admit it even to himself, secretly cherishes an inordinate desire to acquire worldly goods, and to hold them tenaciously as his own property. The creature has not confidence in His Creator, the son hesitates to depend upon his eternal Father's providence, and seeks by undue means to acquire wealth which will leave him independent of the most bountiful of fathers. This is a great mistake, and one that destroys the essence of Christianity, namely, faith, hope, and charity. Hence our divine Teacher warns us earnestly:

"Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also. The light of thy body is thy eye.¹ If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil: thy whole body shall be darksome. If then the light that is in thee, be darkness: the darkness itself how great shall it be? No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other: or he will sustain the one and despise the other. You can not serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat: and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? And which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not solicitous therefore, saying: What

¹Christ terms the eye, which can never see enough, and which always desires more, the seat of avarice; which vice is therefore called the concupiscence of the eye.



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shall we eat: or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow. For the morrow will be solicitous for itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

15. RASH JUDGMENT

Not less dear to the heart of our blessed Lord than poverty of spirit and childlike dependence and confidence in God, are the virtues of humility, charity, and concord and peace among His followers.

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

"And He spoke also to them a similitude: Can the blind lead the blind? do they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one shall be perfect if he be as his master. And why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye, but the beam that is in thy own eye thou considerest not. Or how canst thou say to thy brother: Brother, let me pull the mote out of thy eye: when thou thyself seest not the beam in thy own eye? Hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thy own eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye."

"Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you."

16. PRAYER

"Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who

is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him? All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.”

17. OF THE BROAD AND NARROW ROADS

“Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!”

18. FALSE PROPHETS. TRUE SERVANTS OF CHRIST.

This doctrine of the narrow gate does not suit the worldly-minded man, who affects to disbelieve the teachings of Christ concerning the smallness and difficulties of the road which leads to heaven. Such persons would fain obtain the happiness of heaven, but meanwhile wish to be at liberty to gratify, here on earth, every inclination of their corrupt hearts. Alas! what is still more to be deplored, is the fact that there are never wanting teachers who are always ready to flatter these notions of perverted hearts. These, under the mask of benevolence or liberalism, and in the name of civilization and enlightenment, oppose the gravest and most important principles of the gospel, crying out in flattering accents: “God is pure love and the highest good; He made this beautiful world and all its pleasures for us to enjoy them; enjoy life generally and promiscuously. Therefore enjoy every pleasure within your reach; away with those troublesome restraints which dismal men who know not the world, with its necessities and rights, would place upon you.” How many there are in these times who speak and write in this strain! Alas, they are evil prophets, whose words lead to perdition. Our blessed Lord warns us against these men saying:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit: neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth

that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

"And why call you me, Lord, Lord: and do not the things which I say? Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and cast out devils in Thy name, and done many miracles in Thy name? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity."

19. THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK AND THE HOUSE ON THE SAND

"Every one that cometh to Me, and heareth My words, and doth them, I will show you to whom He is like: He is like to a man building a house, who digged deep, and laid the foundation upon a rock; and when a flood came, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and it could not shake it: for it was founded on a rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock. And every one that heareth these My words, and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man, that built his house upon the sand. And the rains fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof. Every one therefore that heareth these My words, and doth them, shall be likened to a wise man, that built his house upon a rock."

This beautiful parable terminates the Sermon on the Mount. It is a parable full of meaning for each and all of us, for it contains the history and experience of every individual. From youth upwards, through middle age, and even in declining years, we strive and plan and labor, we wish and seek and study. And for what? Every one amongst us is trying to build up the edifice of his fortune. But how differently men build? Some found their happiness upon sensual gratification, or on wealth, or on the arts and sciences, or on honor and prominence before their fellow-men. And as they build, they never think of Christ or His holy law. Their edifice rises in bold and fair proportions, and many admire, and even envy the skilful architects. A few years pass by, violent storms arise, coming either from outside causes, or else as the logical

consequences of inherent and gradually developing evil. Behold! the sinner's temple of happiness totters, falls, and crumbles into ruins, and former friends now pass him and his shattered fortune by with a shudder. Others, more wise, found their happiness on the word of God and the observance of His holy law. Their building goes up quietly and slowly, but surely and permanently. For, behold! the storms come—the storms of sickness, of old age, of misfortune from without, and finally of death. But a happiness built upon virtue is solid and durable, and in the evening hour of life it resembles a bright and glorious summer sunset, while the edifice itself lasts from generation to generation.

CHAPTER XV

JESUS CLEANSSES THE LEPER, AND RESTORES THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

Matt. viii. 1-13; Mark i. 40-45; Luke v. 12-16; vii. 1-10

1. THE LEPER

IN SICKNESS and death, sin manifests its real nature, and finds, as it were, its most vivid and truest expression, so that the diseased and languishing body becomes a painfully true likeness of the sin-tainted soul. This likeness is especially striking in case of leprosy, where the blood of the patient, the very essence of life, becomes corrupt, carrying in its course the most dreadful poison throughout the system, producing the most repulsive ulcers and sores. So contagious was this disease, and at the same time so loathsome, that, among the Jews, lepers were not allowed to dwell in the towns, but were compelled to drag out a miserable and isolated existence in remote places. You see the sinner in the leper. Faith, the most vital force of the soul, and that by which the just man lives and effects good, has been deadened by unbelief or doubt, and spiritual life has become the prey of a deadly poison. Incapacity for all natural good has set in. The immortal soul which came glorious and spotless from the hands of its Creator has become to him an object of disgust, and to man a source of infection. Who can cure and save it? None but the Physician sent down from heaven, who, in order to com-

fort poor, sinning man, and to assure him of His own omnipotent power and good will to cleanse him from the leprosy of the soul, proceeds to heal by His miraculous power the leprosy of body, as the evangelists relate in the following passages:

“And when Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy came to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down, said to Him: If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus having compassion on him, stretched forth His hand: and touching him, saith to him: I will: Be thou made clean. And when he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean. And he strictly charged him, and forthwith sent him away: And He saith to him: See thou tell no one: but go, show thyself to the high-priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. But he being gone out, began to publish, and to blaze abroad the word, so that Jesus could not openly go into the city, but was without in desert places, and they flocked to Him from all sides to hear Him and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. And Jesus retired into the desert and prayed.”

2. THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

“And when Jesus had finished all His words in the hearing of the people, He entered into Capharnaum. And the servant of a certain centurion, who was dear to him, being sick, was ready to die. And when he had heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the ancients of the Jews, desiring Him to come and heal his servant, saying: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick, and is grievously tormented. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him earnestly, saying to Him: he is worthy that thou shouldst do this for him: for he loveth our nation: and he hath built us a synagogue. And Jesus went with them, saying: I will come to him and heal him. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent his friends to Him, saying: Lord, trouble not Thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. For which cause neither did I think myself worthy to come to Thee: but say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers: and I say to one, go, and he goeth: and to another, come, and he cometh: and to my servant, do this, and he doth it. Which Jesus hear-

ing, marveled: and turning about to the multitude that followed Him, He said: Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel. And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion: Go, and as thou hast believed so be it done to thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour, and they who were sent, being returned to the house, found the servant whole who had been sick."

With what touching simplicity the centurion expresses his strong and fervent belief in Christ. He is Lord and Master of the elements, of sickness and health; and as the soldier hearkens to the command of his officer, so do the elements recognize and obey the voice of this their Creator. What a cause of confusion to the Jews is this profession of faith in the power of Jesus Christ, coming from the lips of a Roman soldier!

CHAPTER XVI

JESUS RAISES THE WIDOW'S SON TO LIFE

Luke vii. 11-18

SPIRIT and matter are equally subject to the divine will. Hence even death is obedient to Christ. He has but to appear upon a scene of death, where all seems to be hopelessly lost, where proud man shudders at his own helplessness, and acknowledges his weakness, and by the exercise of His miraculous power, He restores hope and comfort, changing the wail of lamentation into joyful canticles of praise and gratitude.

"And it came to pass afterward that He went into a city that is called Naim: and there went with Him His disciples and a great multitude. And when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and a great multitude of the city was with her. Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy toward her, He said to her: Weep not. And He came near and touched the bier. And they that

carried it stood still. And He said: Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother. And there came a fear on them all, and they glorified God, saying: A great prophet is risen up among us, and, God hath visited His people. And this rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the country round about. And John's disciples told him of all these things."

The evangelists assure us that Christ raised the dead to life on three different occasions. First, in the case of the young man of Naim; secondly, of the daughter of Jairus; and again in the case of Lazarus. The young girl had only just died, the young man was being borne to his grave, and Lazarus had lain four days in the tomb. So from the different stages of decay and corruption of soul will Christ raise the sinner to spiritual life, if he but listen to the call of divine grace. He restored the widow's son because touched at the sight of her tears, the daughter of Jairus because moved to compassion by the grief of the father, and Lazarus because of his sympathy with the bereaved and desolate sisters. Contemplate the tender compassion of our blessed Lord, and learn from Him to sympathize with your afflicted brethren. But as Christ's sympathy was a living and practical one, so be not satisfied to heave a sigh or shed a tear, but extend your hand in help to the afflicted. Show your Christian sympathy, not by words alone, but by substantial aid.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN COME TO JESUS. HE PRAISES JOHN AND DEPLORES THE WANT OF FAITH AMONG THE JEWS

Matt. ix. 2-30; Luke vii. 19-35

1. JOHN'S DISCIPLES ASK JESUS IF HE IS THE MESSIAS

"AND when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, he called to him two of his disciples, and sent them to Jesus, saying: Art thou He that art to come, or look we for another? And when the men were come unto Him, they said:

John the Baptist hath sent us to Thee, saying: Art thou He that are to come, or look we for another? (And in that same hour, he cured many of their diseases, and hurts, and evil spirits, and to many that were blind He gave sight.) And answering, He said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the gospel is preached; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalized in Me."

John sent his disciples to Jesus for their own sake, for he himself had heard God's testifying voice at the baptism in the Jordan and had recognized his Saviour. But it was necessary for his disciples to hear the glad tidings of salvation from Jesus' own lips, and thus be drawn to believe in and to follow Him.

2. JESUS PRAISES JOHN

"And when the messengers of John were departed, Jesus began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are in costly apparel and live delicately, are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? a prophet? Yea I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is He of whom it is written: Behold I send My Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say to you: Amongst those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is the lesser in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you will receive it, he is Elias that is to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

John the Baptist is the Elias, inasmuch as he preceded and prepared the way for the first coming of Christ upon earth, as Elias himself will one day go before Him when He shall come to judge mankind.

3. JESUS COMPLAINS OF THE UNBELIEVING JEWS

The scribes and Pharisees were not ready to receive either the stern severity of John, or the gentle benignity of Jesus. Like silly children, they wish to have things according to their

fancy, and get angry and sulky because the play does not suit them.

“And all the people and the publicans hearing Jesus, justified God, being baptized with John’s baptism. But the Pharisees and the lawyers despised the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized by Him. And the Lord said: Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and what are they like? They are like to children sitting in the market-place, and speaking one to another, and saying: We have piped to you, and you have not danced: we have mourned, and you have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say: He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners. And wisdom is justified by all her children,” that is, recognized and admitted by all those who have the good will and truly childlike disposition.

“Then began He to upbraid the cities, wherein were done the most of His miracles, for that they had not done penance. Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you: It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. And thou Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? thou shalt go down even unto hell; for if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

“At that time Jesus answered and said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me by My Father. And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and He to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CONVERSION OF MARY MAGDALEN

Luke vii. 36; viii. 3

THE first person of whom we read in the Gospel, as coming to Jesus solely and exclusively on her soul's account, seeking mercy and craving pardon and freedom from sin, is Mary Magdalen. She was the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

Down deep in her heart was a still, small voice disturbing her enjoyment of sinful pleasure. "Magdalen, what hast thou become, and when all this is over, what will become of thee?" The voice grew louder and more frequent. She felt poor and lonely, and her heart grew sad as her conscience proclaimed aloud her numberless sins. But now dawned the day of grace. A voice was heard in the land, saying: "Come to Me, all ye that labor and are heavily burdened." These words of mercy penetrated the sinner's heart. She obeyed and was saved.

"And one of the Pharisees desired Jesus to eat with him. And He went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to meat. And behold a woman that was in the city a sinner, when she knew that He sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And standing behind at His feet, she began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. And the Pharisee, who had invited Him, seeing it, spoke within himself, saying: This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said to him: Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. But he said: Master, say it. A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which therefore of the two loveth him most? Simon answering, said: I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said to him: Thou hast judged rightly. And turning to the woman, He said unto Simon: Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but she, since she came in, hath not ceased

to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. And He said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman: Thy faith had made thee safe: go in peace.

“And it came to pass afterward, that He traveled through the cities and towns preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God: and the twelve with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary who is called Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were gone forth, and Joanna the wife of Chusa, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who ministered unto Him of their substance.”

Behold, how He whom angels serve, permits Himself, in His wearisome wanderings through the towns and cities of Judea, to be served by kind-hearted, pious women. Touching proof of Christ’s condescension, as well as of gentle woman’s pure and holy love!

CHAPTER XIX

HEALING OF THE BLIND AND DUMB DEMONIAK. PERVERSION OF THE PHARISEES

Matt. xii. 22-45; Mark iii. 20-30

JESUS CHRIST was accused by His own people of madness, obsession, sedition, gluttony, and other sins.

“And they come to a house: and the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when His friends had heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said: He is become mad. Then was offered to Him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and He healed him, so that he spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said: Is not this the son of David? And the scribes who were come down from Jerusalem, said: He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils He casteth out devils. And after He had called them together,

knowing their thoughts, He said to them in parables: How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself that kingdom can not stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house can not stand. And if Satan be risen up against himself, he is divided, and can not stand, but hath an end. How then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. No man can enter into the house of a strong man and rob him of his goods, unless he first bind the strong man, and then shall he plunder his house."

Our Saviour having come upon earth in order to rescue souls from the power of Satan, how could He do otherwise than first conquer the prince of hell himself? Not in Beelzebub's name, therefore, did Christ act, for it was in opposition to that demon's power that he had come: and none but the scribes and Pharisees, in their accursed blindness, could say the contrary.

"He that is not with Me, is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth. Therefore I say to you: Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, shall never have forgiveness, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit. Either make the tree good, and its fruit good: or make the tree evil, and its fruit evil: for by the fruit the tree is known. O generation of vipers, how can you speak good things, whereas you are evil? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

This bold and severe language of our divine Master stirred up the scribes and Pharisees, who then challenged Him to

establish by miracle His right thus to speak. He directed their attention to the great miracle of His resurrection.

“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying: Master, we would see a sign from Thee. Who answering, said to them: An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale’s belly three days and three nights; so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here. The queen of the south shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon here. And when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation.”

The Jews had been chosen in their ancestor, Abraham, to be God’s people; while the other nations were left to paganism and under the dominion of Satan. Now these people reject the Messiah, on whose account they were so favored, and who was to be the honor and glory of their race. Therefore they themselves pervert their chosen state into one of abandonment by God; their malice is many times blacker than that of the ignorant heathen.

CHAPTER XX

THE MOTHER AND BRETHREN OF JESUS

Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21

DESPITE the care with which God segregated the Jewish people from pagan nations, they failed to correspond with

His laws, and therefore fell under the tyranny of the Roman Empire. A few individuals, however, were chosen by Christ to be the spiritual progenitors of a new and universal family of Christians; His only real and true family who were to be dearer to Him than even the little circle of whom He was flesh and blood. He calls the members of this supernatural family His brethren; for, being closely allied to Him by faith and practical charity, they are heirs of heaven and children of the heavenly Father. He calls them His mother; because, being destined to spread by word and act the gospel of Christ, they thus reproduce Him in the hearts of unbelieving sinners.

“As He was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold His mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him; and they could not come at Him for the crowd, and they sent unto Him, calling Him, for the multitude sat about Him. And one said unto Him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee. But He answering him that told Him, said: Who is My mother, and who are My brethren? And looking round about on them who sat about Him, and stretching forth His hand toward His disciples, He said: Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother.”

Every Christian knows that our Saviour had neither brother nor sister in the literal sense of the word, and that His ever-blessed mother always remained a virgin. By the word “brethren” is to be understood, according to the Hebrew mode of expression, His cousins. “Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?” Do not suppose that He who had been always so obedient to His parents, and who, in His very agony on the cross, was so solicitous about His beloved mother, wished here to show any disrespect to His mother and relations, or to deny them as if ashamed of their poverty. O no; He wanted to prove to the people that He, as a teacher of heavenly wisdom and a supreme law-giver, was not only the Son of man and a member of a small human family, but that He was also the Son of God who had come down from heaven to be the pride, comfort, and joy, not of a few brothers and sisters only, but to be the salvation of all men.

CHAPTER XXI

JESUS PREACHES FROM THE SHIP

Matt. xiii. 1-53; Mark iv. 1-34; Luke viii. 4-18

1. THE SMALL BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH. THE SEED ON THE GOOD SOIL AND THE SEED ON THE BARREN GROUND

Now, from the side of a vessel on the lake of Genesareth, Jesus gives the future history of this new kingdom; its rise and progress, its struggles and triumphs, and its final completion on the day of judgment. But as this history of the Church constitutes the "mysteries of the kingdom," or the future destiny of His Church, He speaks in parables, whose meaning will be revealed only to the elect.

"The same day Jesus going out of the house, again began to teach by the sea side: and a great multitude was gathered together unto Him so that He went up into a ship and sat, and all the multitude was upon the land by the sea side. And He taught them many things in parables, and said unto them in His doctrine: Hear ye: Behold, the sower went out to sow his seed. And whilst he soweth, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the birds of the air came, and ate it up. And other some fell upon stony ground where it had not much earth: and it shot up immediately, because it had no depth of earth. And when the sun was risen it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And some fell upon good ground: and brought forth fruit that grew up, and increased, and yielded, one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred. And He said: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

"And when He was alone, the twelve that were with Him asked Him the parable, and said to Him: Why speakest thou to them in parables? Who answered and said to them: Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: but to them that are without it is not given, all things are done in parables. For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound: but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath. Therefore do I speak to them in parables: because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be

forgiven them. And the prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled in them, who saith: By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For, amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them: and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them."

Does our divine Master, then, wish that the Jews should be lost through not understanding His language? By no means. But they, by despising His plain admonitions, had thus rendered themselves, as well as by their own malice, unworthy to understand the word of God.

"And He saith to them: Are you ignorant of this parable? how shall you know all parables? Hear you therefore the parable of the sower. The seed is the word of God: he that soweth, soweth the word; they by the way side, where the seed is sown, are they that hear. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, there cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he that receiveth the seed by the way side. And he that receiveth the seed upon stony ground: this is he that heareth the word, and immediately receiveth it with joy. Yet hath he not root in himself, but is only for a time; and when there ariseth tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized. And he that receiveth the seed among thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word, and he becometh fruitless. But he that received the seed upon good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth, and beareth fruit, and yieldeth the one an hundredfold, and another sixty, and another thirty."

2. THE DESTINY OF THE CHURCH. THE PARABLE OF THE CANDLE IN THE CANDLESTICK

Here we discover, in the seed, the germ or beginning of God's kingdom on earth, the word of Christ. Obscure and hidden at first, like the seed in the clay, but destined one day



Martin Feuerstein

ST. MARY MAGDALENE AND COMPANIONS ADRIPT AT SEA

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to be a resplendent beacon-light, shedding its brilliant rays to the uttermost corners of the earth, and like a great tree sheltering all men under its branches.

“And Jesus said: Now no man lighting a candle covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed: but setteth it upon a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light. For there is not anything secret, that shall not be made manifest: nor hidden, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how you hear: if any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

3. THE IRREPRESSIBLE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH. THE PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED, OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES, OF THE MUSTARD-SEED AND THE LEAVEN

Like the seed, the Church will come forth and develop with irresistible power and vigor during all ages. Countless and mighty enemies may rise up against her from within and without, but they will wither as the tares in the parable: while she will become a stately tree, covering all men with her sheltering branches. The seed or germ of life is in her bosom, namely, divine truth and divine grace. This supernatural principle will quicken humanity, as the leaven quickens the flour, making it palatable and wholesome.

“And He said: So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, whilst he knoweth not. For the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterward the full corn in the ear, and when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

“Another parable He proposed to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field; but while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the good-man of the house coming, said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him, Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No: lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the

reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn."

"Another parable He proposed to them, saying: To what shall we liken the kingdom of God, or to what parable shall we compare it? The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which is the least indeed of all seeds that are in the earth: but when it is grown up, it becometh greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, and shooteth out great branches, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the shadow thereof. Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes, according as they were able to hear: and without parables He did not speak to them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying: I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world. But apart He explained all things to His disciples. Then having sent away the multitudes, He came into the house: and His disciples came to Him, saying: Expound to us the parable of the cockle of the field. Who made answer and said to them: He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. And the field is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the angels. Even as cockle therefore is gathered up and burnt with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world; the Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity: And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

4. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE CHURCH. THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD. THE PEARL. THE AIM OF GOD'S CHURCH ON EARTH.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD AND THE USELESS FISHES

The supernatural wealth of truth and of saving grace bequeathed by Christ to His kingdom on earth, the Church, is the only really valuable good. Learning, gold, property, honor, sensual enjoyment, can not be compared with these gifts from heaven.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field: which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes; which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have ye understood all these things? They say to Him: Yes. He said unto them: Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old. And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, He passed from thence.”

Let us lay this parable close to our hearts. He who finds the treasure in the field and squanders it; he who buys the pearl, but, through carelessness and levity, loses it—that is to say, the Christian who, after having been endowed with God’s grace, despises and rejects it—can expect naught else, if he continue in his indifference, but to be cast away forever.

CHAPTER XXII

CHRIST STILLS THE STORM

Matt. viii. 18-27; Mark iv. 35-40; Luke viii. 22-25

ALTHOUGH the holy Catholic Church, by her divine origin, her supernatural riches, and her irresistible growth, proves herself to be the kingdom of God on earth, yet, because her lot is cast amid the wickedness of the world, she cannot escape the assaults and persecution. But she will not fail, nor even flinch, under the severest attacks. Inseparably united to Jesus, who is her anchor of safety, she will ride the wildest sea and withstand the fiercest blast; till, at the proper time,

when just as all seems lost, her divine Captain will awake, stand up, and say to her persecutors, "Be still."

"And that same day, when evening was come, Jesus seeing great multitudes about Him, gave orders to pass over the water, saying: Let us pass over to the other side. And a certain scribe came and said to Him: Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go. And Jesus saith to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. And another of His disciples said to Him: Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him: Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead. And when He entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him, and sending away the multitudes, they take Him, even as He was, in the ship. There were other ships with them. And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, a storm of wind and wave, so that the ship was filled and covered with waves, and was in danger. But Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship. And His disciples came to Him, and awaked Him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish! Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish? And Jesus saith to them: Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Have ye not faith yet? Then rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea, saying: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there came a great calm. And He said to them: Where is your faith? But they feared exceedingly, and said, wondering, one to another: Who is this, thinkest thou, that both wind and sea obey Him? What manner of man is this?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TWO PERSONS POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL IN THE LAND OF THE GERASENS

Matt. viii. 28-34; Mark v. 1-20; Luke viii. 26-39

UNBLEMISHED purity and holiness, such as the Saviour's, are always an object of horror to the evil spirit.

"And they came over the strait of the sea into the country of the Gerasens, which is over against Galilee. And as Jesus went out of the ship to the land, immediately there met Him

out of the monuments a man with an unclean spirit¹ now a very long time; and he wore no garments, neither did he abide in a house: who had his dwelling in the tombs, and no man now could bind him even with chains. For having been often bound with fetters and chains, he had burst the chains, and broken the fetters in pieces, and no one could tame him; and he was always day and night in the monuments and in the mountains, crying and cutting himself with stones, and exceeding fierce, so that none could pass by that way. And seeing Jesus afar off, he ran and adored Him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said: What have I to do with Thee, Jesus the Son of the most high God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? I adjure Thee by God that thou torment me not.² For He said unto him: Go out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him: What is thy name? And he saith to Him: My name is Legion, for we are many. And the devils besought Him much that He would not drive them away out of the country, nor command them to go into the abyss. And there was there near the mountain, a great herd of swine, feeding. And the spirits besought Him, saying: If thou cast us out, send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And Jesus immediately gave them leave. And the unclean spirits going out, entered into the swine: and the herd with great violence was carried headlong down a steep place into the sea, being about 2000, and were stifled in the waters.”

In this thrilling occurrence we discover a great and two-fold mystery: the mystery of Christ's power, as well also as that of the evil spirit. Man having, through sin, rebelled against God, was, in punishment of his disloyalty, made subject, himself and all creation of which he had once been the master, to the power of the devil. How appalling this power of the devil was over men and senseless creatures, when permitted by God, is seen in the miracle at Gerasa. But this power crumbles before the might of the Son of man.

“And they that fed them fled, and told it in the city, and in the fields, and in the villages. And the whole city went out to see what was done. And they come to Jesus: and they see him that was troubled with the devil, sitting at the feet

¹St. Matthew speaks of a second possessed person who accompanied the above, and who also approached Jesus.

²It is the devil, not the possessed man, who utters these words. The latter is the unwilling agent of the former.

of Jesus, clothed, and well in his wits, and they were afraid. And they that had seen it, told them in what manner he had been dealt with, who had the devil, and concerning the swine. And the multitude of the country of the Gerasens began to pray Him that He would depart from their coasts, for they were taken with great fear. And when Jesus went up into the ship, He that had been troubled with the devil began to beseech Him that He might be with Him, and He admitted him not, but saith to him: Go into thy house to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee. And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men wondered.”

CHAPTER XXIV

JESUS HEALS THE WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD. HE RAISES THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS FROM THE DEAD

Matt. ix. 18-26; Mark v. 21-43; Luke viii. 40-56

ARE we to look upon the various miracles of Christ as mere passing events? Certainly not. They are overflowing with consolation for the afflicted and the needy of all times. The arm of Him who, eighteen centuries ago, healed the sick and raised the dead to life by a single word, and even by the touch of His garment, is not yet weakened, nor is His mercy diminished.

“And when Jesus had passed again in the ship over the strait, a great multitude assembled together unto Him waiting: and He was nigh unto the sea. And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue named Jairus: and seeing Jesus, falleth down at His feet. And he besought Him much that He would come into his house, saying: My daughter is at the point of death; come, lay thy hand upon her, that she may be safe, and may live. And Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him, and they thronged Him. And a woman came who was under an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians,

and had spent all that she had, and was nothing the better, but rather worse. When she had heard of Jesus, she came in the crowd behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment. For, she said, if I shall touch but His garment, I shall be whole. And forthwith the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the evil. And immediately Jesus knowing in Himself the virtue that had proceeded from Him, turning to the multitude, said: Who hath touched My garments? And all denying, Peter and they that were with Him, said, Master, thou seest the multitude thronging and pressing Thee, and sayest thou: Who hath touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me; for I know that a virtue is gone out from Me. And He looked about to see her who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, seeing she was not hid, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth, and declared before all the people, for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was immediately cured. And He said to her: Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be thou whole of thy disease. And the woman was made whole from that hour."

"While He was yet speaking, some come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying: Thy daughter is dead: why dost thou trouble the Master any farther? But Jesus having heard the word that was spoken, saith to the ruler of the synagogue: Fear not: only believe, and she shall be safe. And He admitted not any man to follow Him, but Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and he seeth a tumult, and people weeping and wailing much. And going in, He saith to them: Why make you this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. But He having put them all out, taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And taking the damsel by the hand, He saith to her: Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel (I say to thee) arise; and her spirit returned, and immediately the damsel rose up, and walked: and she was twelve years old: and they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them strictly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat, and the fame thereof spread abroad into all that country."

CHAPTER XXV

THE HEALING OF TWO BLIND MEN, AND OF ONE POSSESSED BY A DEVIL. THE SECOND VISIT OF JESUS TO NAZARETH

Matt. ix. 27-38; xiii. 54-58; Mark vi. 1-6

“AND as Jesus passed from thence, there followed Him two blind men crying out and saying, Have mercy on us, O Son of David. And when He was come to the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus saith to them: Do you believe that I can do this unto you? They say to Him: Yea, Lord. Then He touched their eyes, saying: According to your faith, be it done unto you. And their eyes were opened: and Jesus strictly charged them, saying: See that no man know this. But they going out, spread His fame abroad in all that country. And when they were gone out, behold they brought Him a dumb man, possessed with a devil. And after the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke, and the multitudes wondered, saying: Never was the like seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said: By the prince of devils He casteth out devils.”

Christ had already completely refuted this senseless and diabolical calumny. Yet the Pharisees repeat it with insolent boldness, just as if they had not heard its contradiction proved.

2. “And going out from thence, Jesus went into His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath was come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and many hearing Him, were in admiration at His doctrine, saying: How came this man by all these things? and what wisdom is this that is given to Him, and such mighty works as are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon? are not also His sisters here with us? Whence therefore hath He all these things? And they were scandalized in regard of Him. And Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred. And He could not do any miracle there, because of their unbelief, only that He cured a few that were sick, laying His hands upon them. And He wondered because of their unbelief, and He went through the villages round about teaching.

“And Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching

in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. And seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them, because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then He saith to His disciples, The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest.

“And it came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He passed from thence to teach and preach in their cities. And going forth, they preached that men should do penance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BEHEADING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Matt. xiv. 1-13; Mark vi. 14-29; Luke ix. 7-9

HEROD had cast St. John the Baptist into prison. For nearly two years, this man of God had languished in chains. At last the day dawned upon which he was to receive the palm of victory from the hand of the tyrant, and to mark with his martyr-blood the way he had prepared for Him who had come to give testimony, even by His death on the cross, to grace and truth.

“Now King Herod the tetrarch heard of all things that were done by Jesus, and he was in a doubt because it was said by some, that John was risen from the dead: but by other some, that Elias hath appeared: and by others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said: John I have beheaded; but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he sought to see Jesus, for His name was made manifest. And King Herod said to his servants: John the Baptist is risen again from the dead! and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him. And others said: It is Elias. But others said: It is a prophet, as one of the prophets. Which Herod hearing, said: John whom I beheaded, he is again risen from the dead! For Herod himself had sent and apprehended John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother, because he had married her. For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife. And having a mind to put him to death, he

feared the people; because they esteemed him as a prophet. Now Herodias laid snares for him: and was desirous to put him to death and could not. For Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man: and kept him, and when he heard him, did many things: and he heard him willingly. And when a convenient day was come, Herod made a supper for his birthday, for the princes, and tribunes, and chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of the same Herodias had come in, and had danced, and pleased Herod, and them that were at table with him; the king said to the damsel: Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee: And he swore to her: Whatsoever thou shalt ask I will give thee, though it be the half of my kingdom. Who when she was gone out, said to her mother: What shall I ask? But she said: The head of John the Baptist. And when she was come in immediately with haste to the king, she asked, saying: I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist. And the king was struck sad: yet because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her; but sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish. And he beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish: and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother. Which his disciples hearing came, and took his body: and laid it in a tomb, and came and told Jesus."

So died the last and greatest prophet of the old law; closing by his death that long list of noble prophet-martyrs of which Isaias was the first. Christendom commemorates every year, on the twenty-ninth of August, the triumph of the Baptist; and for all time to come his name will be honored, praised, and glorified.

CHAPTER XXVII

JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND MEN

Matt. xiv. 13-21; Mark vi. 30-44; Luke ix. 10-17; John vi. 1-14

"WHEN Jesus had heard" (of the beheading of John the Baptist) "he retired from thence. And the apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to Him all things that they had done and taught. And He said to them: Come apart into a desert-place, and rest a little: for there were many coming

and going, and they had not so much time as to eat. And going up into a ship, they went into a desert-place apart which belongeth to Bethsaida: over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias: and they saw them going away and many knew it: and they ran flocking thither on foot from all the cities and were there before Him. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased.

“And Jesus going out saw a great multitude, and He had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. And He went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Pasch, the festival-day of the Jews, was near at hand, and He began to teach them many things, and to speak to them of the kingdom of God, and healed their sick and them who were in need of healing. And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him, saying: This is a desert-place and the hour is now past, send them away that going into the next villages and towns, they may buy themselves meat to eat. But Jesus said to them: They have no need to go; give you them to eat. And they said to Him: Let us go and buy bread for 200 pence and we shall give them to eat.

“When Jesus had lifted up His eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that they may eat? and this He said to try him; for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him: Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them; that every one may take a little. But He saith to His disciples: How many loaves have you? Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him: There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes: but what are these among so many? And He said to His disciples: Bring them hither to Me.”

What contracted notions the apostles still retained! and how limited their faith and charity! Five thousand men, not to speak of the women and children, who had eagerly and devotedly followed Jesus into the desert, must take their departure although it was nightfall, and each one look out for something to eat, as best he could. It never occurred to their minds, that He, who made all things out of nothing, who pours out the horn of plenty in order to feed the whole world, could with one word procure food for all here present, instead of sending them away hungry and exhausted.

“And Jesus commanded them that they should make them all sit down by companies upon the green grass. For there was much grass in the place, and they did so; and He made them all sit down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties. The men therefore sat down in number about 5000. And Jesus taking the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and when He had given thanks, blessed them, and broke the loaves, and distributed them to His disciples to set before the multitude: and the disciples gave to the multitudes that were sat down. In like manner also of the fishes, He divided among them all, as much as they would; and they did all eat and were filled. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten, and of the fishes. And the number of those that did eat were 5000 men, besides women and children. Now those men when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is, of a truth, the prophet that is to come into the world.”

Great and glorious Redeemer of the world! How rich thou art in love, how strong in miracle! The impoverished and straitened head of a hungry family turns to Thee, the afflicted and helpless call on Thee, their almighty Lord, with unbounded confidence and firmest faith. The Lord will not forsake His servants, but will aid them abundantly even when their fellow-man would spare and refuse.

CHAPTER XXVIII

JESUS WALKS ON THE WATER AND CALMS ANOTHER STORM. PETER WALKS ON THE WATER

Matt. xiv. 22-34; Mark vi. 45-53; John vi. 15-24

“JESUS therefore, when He knew that they would come to take Him by force, and make Him a king, immediately obliged His disciples to go into the ship, that they might go before Him over the water, to the city of Bethsaida, while He dismissed the people. And having dismissed the multitude, He fled again Himself alone into the mountain to pray. And when evening was come His disciples went down to the sea; they went over the sea to Capharnaum. And it was now dark,

and Jesus was not come unto them, but He was alone on the land. The boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew, and Jesus saw them laboring in rowing, for the wind was against them."

"About the fourth watch of the night, He cometh to them walking upon the sea. When they had rowed therefore about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking upon the sea, and drawing nigh to the ship. And He would have passed by them, but they seeing Him walking upon the sea thought it was an apparition, and were troubled. They cried out for fear, saying: It is an apparition. For they all saw Him, and immediately Jesus spoke to them, and said: Have a good heart, it is I, fear not."

"And Peter making answer, said: Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters. And He said: Come. And Peter coming down out of the boat, walked upon the water, to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, took hold of him, and said to him: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"

"And He went up to them into the ship; and when they were coming to the ship, the wind ceased. And they were far more astonished within themselves, for they understood not concerning the loaves, for their heart was blinded. And they that were in the boat came and adored Him, saying: Indeed, Thou art the Son of God. And presently the ship was at the land to which they were going, and they came into the land of Genesareth."

What a grand exhibition of the divine power of the Son of God! He steps upon the storm-tossed waters and the angry sea lies quiet under His foot.

CHAPTER XXIX

JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE. HE PROMISES THE HOLY EUCHARIST

John vi. 22; vii. 1; Mark vi. 54-56

"LOUDLY praise the Lord, magnify and glorify His name; adore Him in His holy house." Where is this holy house of

the Lord, the house of the infinite God whom heaven and earth can not contain? It is the tabernacle on our altars. Here dwells the Lord, the God made man, whose delight it is to be with the children of men. Here He abides in the mystery of His love, the veritable bread of life which He ordained in the supper-room at Jerusalem, on the eve of His passion and death, and which He had promised a year before in the synagogue at Capharnaum. Let us read the memorable words of this promise as given us in the Gospel according to St. John.

“The next day, the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea, saw there was no other ship there but one, and that Jesus had not entered into the ship with His disciples, but that His disciples were gone away alone: But other ships came in from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they had eaten the bread, the Lord giving thanks. When therefore the multitude saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they took shipping, and came to Capharnaum seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him: Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them, and said: Amen, amen I say to you: you seek Me not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you. For Him hath God the Father sealed.”

Observe how the wisest of teachers prepares the people by gently calling their attention from earthly to heavenly food; from natural to supernatural bread. This was the aim and object of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves on the day before, namely, to open the sense and understanding of His hearers to the heavenly manna of the New Testament.

“They said therefore unto Him: What shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered, and said to them: This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He hath sent. They said therefore to Him: What sign therefore dost Thou shew that we may see, and may believe Thee? what dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say to you, Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God

is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. They said therefore unto Him: Lord, give us always this bread. And Jesus said to them: I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger: and he that believeth in Me, shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that you also have seen Me, and you believe not. All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me: and him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out: because I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. Now this is the will of the Father who sent Me: that of all that He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day. And this is the will of My Father that sent Me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day."

This is precisely the aim of the Blessed Sacrament, namely, to unite us so intimately with Christ that we may obtain a share in His divine-human life and become united to Him forever.

"The Jews therefore murmured at Him, because He had said: I am the living bread which came down from heaven, and they said: Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then saith He: I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said to them: Murmur not among yourselves: No man can come to Me, except the Father, who hath sent Me, draw Him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets: And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to Me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, but He who is of God, He hath seen the Father. Amen, amen I say unto you: He that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life."

For only the true and firm believer, that is, He who having received from the Father the gift of faith, has dutifully cooperated therewith, can receive the heavenly bread worthily, and find in it the pledge of everlasting life.

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How

can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed: He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live for ever. These things He said teaching in the synagogue, in Capharnaum."

Our divine Master here promises the Blessed Sacrament of the altar in the clearest and most indisputable words. Erring teachers may assert that the words to "eat My flesh and drink My blood," are not to be taken literally, but figuratively, as meaning to believe in Christ and to love Him. This is a false construction; for, in the first place, to eat "the flesh of a person," when used figuratively in Hebrew or any other of the Oriental languages, never means to believe in Him or to love him, but on the contrary, to hate and to abuse him. So we find in the Book of Job: "Why do you persecute me, and glut yourselves with my flesh?" (*Job* xix. 22.) Again we read in the twenty-sixth Psalm: "Whilst the wicked draw near against me, to eat my flesh."

In the second place, Christ did not need to exact belief in His flesh and blood, that is, in His humanity. The Jews believed completely, for they had it before their eyes. Were He speaking of pure and spiritual belief, He would not require belief in His flesh and blood, but in His divinity, and would have said: "Unless you eat of the Godhead of the Son of man and drink," etc.

In the third place, this Christ who was to be believed had already come down from heaven and was there present, whilst the mystic bread of which He spoke was something to come in the future: "The bread which I *will* give you," etc.

Finally, although the Jews understood the Saviour's words literally, yet He gave them no explanation, as a kind teacher would naturally have done, and as He was wont to do in their unintentional misunderstandings. On the contrary, He repeats and strengthens His apparently objectionable language, although He sees the falling away of many, and calls their



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THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

attention to another and more palpable miracle, that of His ascension.

“Many therefore of His disciples hearing it, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it? But Jesus knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at this, said to them: Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray Him. And He said: Therefore did I say to you, that no man can come to Me, unless it be given Him by My Father.”

Jesus in speaking of the flesh that profiteth nothing, does not mean His own humanity, otherwise He would not have assumed a fleshly body, and the sick would not have been healed by contact with His garments. When the Holy Scripture uses the word flesh as opposed to spirit, it understands by the latter the nobler and more elevated part of man's nature—such as the faculties of the soul, and the disposition and capacity for faith—whilst by flesh is meant the less worthy part of our nature, which rebels against faith in the unseen. In this sense, the apostle Paul writes to the Romans: “The wisdom of the flesh is death: but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace” (*Rom.* viii. 6).

“After this many of His disciples went back: and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God. Jesus answered them: Have not I chosen you twelve: and one of you is a devil? Now He meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for this same was about to betray Him, whereas he was one of the twelve.”

“After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Judea: because the Jews sought to kill Him. And running through that whole country, they began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into towns or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch but the hem of His garment, and as many as touched Him were made whole.”

IV

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST, FROM THE THIRD PASSOVER AFTER HIS BAPTISM IN THE JORDAN UNTIL THE FOURTH PASSOVER, THAT IS, TILL THE WEEK OF HIS PASSION

CHAPTER XXX

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUTWARD RIGHT- EOUSNESS AND INTERNAL PURITY OF THE HEART

Matt. xv. 1-20; Mark vii. 1-23

THE great difference between the moral system of Christ and that of the Pharisees was, that they made theirs consist in a mere outward observance of the law, whilst Christ required purity of heart, innocence of soul, and true, living charity. They held that man was justified by this external observance, whilst Christ exacts the sanctification of the internal man above all else, and recognizes only such works as pleasing and meritorious before God as are actuated by faith and love toward Him. Hence the Saviour's severe rebuke to the Pharisees.

“And there assembled together unto Him the Pharisees and some of the scribes, coming from Jerusalem. And when they had seen some of His disciples eat bread with common, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews eat not without often washing their hands, holding the tradition of the ancients. And when they come from the market, unless they be washed, they eat not: and many other things there are that have been delivered to them to observe, the washings of cups and of pots, and of brazen vessels and of beds. And the Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus: Why do not thy disciples walk according to the tradition of the ancients, but they eat bread with common hands? But He answering, said to them: Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for your tradition? For God said: Honor thy father and mother; and, he that shall

curse father or mother, let him die the death. But you say: Whosoever shall say to father or mother, Corban,¹ the gift whatsoever proceedeth from me, shall profit thee; and farther you suffer him not to do anything for his father and mother; he shall not honor his father or his mother: and you have made void the commandment of God for your tradition. Hypocrites, well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying: This people honoreth Me with their lips: but their heart is far from Me. And in vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men. For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washings of pots and of cups: and many other things you do like to these."

In order to obtain abundant alms for themselves, and to secure large donations for the temple, the Jewish priests preached the impious doctrine that offerings made to the temple were more pleasing to God than the proper maintenance of one's own aged and helpless parents. The Catholic Church teaches that sons and daughters must sacrifice to the proper support of their aged parents every desire, even the desire to enter the most perfect Religious Order.

"And having again called together the multitudes unto Him He said to them: Hear ye Me all, and understand. Not that which from without goeth into the mouth defileth a man: but what cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. Then came His disciples, when He was come into the house from the multitude, and said to Him: Dost Thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized? But He answering, said: Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind, and leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind both fall into the pit. And Peter answering said to Him: Expound to us this parable. But He said: Are you also yet without understanding? Do you not understand, that whatsoever from without entereth into the mouth can not defile a man, because it entereth not into his heart, but goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the privy, purging all meats? But the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man: for from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies; these are the

¹Corban is an expression meaning "Let God take care of you."

things that defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands doth not defile a man.”

The Pharisees affected to believe that uncleanness of the hands was communicated to the food and thereby to the soul—an absurd confounding of the spiritual with the material. St. Paul, too, in his epistle to Timothy, condemns those who require abstinence from certain meats, whereas everything created by God is good. It is self-evident that the ancient and pious practice of fasting and of abstaining from certain kinds of food, on certain days, is not here forbidden. For the object of fasting is not to despise God’s gifts, but to mortify our senses and to establish the mastery of the soul over the flesh.

CHAPTER XXXI

JESUS CURES THE DAUGHTER OF THE WOMAN OF CHANAAN AND THE MAN THAT WAS DEAF AND DUMB

Matt. xv. 21-29; Mark vii. 24-37

“AND rising from thence He went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon:¹ and entering into a house, He would that no man should know it, and He could not be hid. For a woman as soon as she heard of Him, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, came in and fell down at His feet, crying out, said to Him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Jesus answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying: Send her away: for she crieth after us. And He answering, said: I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. For the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician born. But she came and adored Him, saying: Lord, help me. And she besought Him that He would cast forth a devil out of her daughter. Who said to her: Suffer first the children to be filled: for it is not good to take the

¹This was the country of the pagan Phenicians. Our Lord’s visit was but a passing one, for the time had not yet come for the heathen to receive the full and complete blessing of salvation. Hence our Lord’s apparent sternness to the woman of Chanaan.

bread of the children, and cast it to the dogs. But she answered, and said to Him: Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat under the table of their masters the crumbs of the children. Then Jesus answering, said to her: O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt. For this saying, go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And her daughter was cured from that hour. And when she was come into her house, she found the girl lying upon the bed, and that the devil was gone out."

2. "And again going out of the coasts of Tyre, He came by Sidon to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring to Him one deaf and dumb; and they besought Him that He would lay His hand upon him. And taking him from the multitude apart, He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue: and looking up to heaven, He groaned, and said to him: Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right. And He charged them that they should tell no man. But the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it: and so much the more did they wonder, saying: He hath done all things well: He hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

Every man born into the world resembles this object of Christ's compassion. For, owing to the sin of our first parents, every child of Adam is deaf, that is, incapable of embracing supernatural truth; as well as dumb, that is, unable to give glory to God in anything. It is only in the sacrament of Baptism that the ear of the soul is opened and its tongue loosened. The regenerating waters of this sacrament effect a miraculous change in man, for he is enabled by grace, not only to hear the truth, but to lay it up in his soul with supernatural conviction and understanding, and also to live by this saving truth. He receives the faculty, not only to express outwardly with his lips this religious conviction, but also so to profess his faith, that a mysterious power leading to salvation will accompany this profession. This effect is symbolized when the priest touches with saliva the ear and mouth of the one to be baptized, saying: "Ephpheta, be thou opened."

CHAPTER XXXII

JESUS FEEDS FOUR THOUSAND MEN WITH SEVEN LOAVES. THE SIGN OF JONAS. THE DISCIPLES' WANT OF FAITH. THE BLIND MAN AT BETHSAIDA

Matt. xv. 30; xvi. 1-12; Mark viii. 1-26

1. THE MIRACULOUS MULTIPLICATION OF THE SEVEN LOAVES

“IN those days when Jesus had passed away from thence, He came nigh the sea of Galilee: and going up into a mountain He sat there. And there came to Him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others; and they cast them down at His feet, and He healed them: so that the multitudes marvelled seeing the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind see: and they glorified the God of Israel. And the multitude had nothing to eat. And Jesus called together His disciples, and said: I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me, now three days, and have not what to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way; for some of them came from afar off. And the disciples say unto Him: Whence then should we have so many loaves in the desert, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus said to them: How many loaves have you? But they said: Seven and a few little fishes. And He commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground. And taking the seven loaves, and giving thanks, He brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them, and the disciples gave to the people. And they had a few little fishes; and He blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did all eat, and had their fill. And they took up seven baskets full, of what remained of the fragments. And they that did eat, were 4000 men, besides children and women. And having dismissed the multitude, He went up into a ship with His disciples: and came into the coasts of Magedan, the parts of Dalmanutha.”

From this we learn that those who hunger after spiritual bread, that is, those who ardently desire the word of God, will not be deprived of material bread; for whosoever seeks first the kingdom of God and His justice, to Him will all things else necessary be added. As Christ fed in the body 4000 men with seven loaves, so does He feed and support

to-day, in a spiritual manner, the people of every clime and tongue with the seven holy sacraments.

2. THE SIGN FROM HEAVEN, AND THE SIGN OF JONAS

“And the Pharisees and Sadducees came forth and began to question with Him, asking Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. And sighing deeply in spirit, He saith: Why doth this generation ask a sign? Amen I say to you, If a sign shall be given to this generation.”

“But He answered and said to them: When it is evening, you say: It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning: To-day there will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering. You know then how to discern the face of the sky: and can you not know the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. And He left them and went away.”

What perverse blindness! They ascribe to diabolical influence and power the miracles of Christ upon earth, and yet demand that He shall prove His heavenly mission by a miracle wrought on the heavenly bodies. They speak of signs in the heavens and understand the weather; but the signs of their times, that is, the fulfillment of all the prophecies in Christ's coming and miracles, these they shut out from their view.

3. THE DISCIPLES' WANT OF FAITH. THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

“Jesus leaving them went away again up into the ship, and passed to the other side of the water. When His disciples were come over the water, they had forgotten to take bread; and they had but one loaf with them in the ship. Jesus said to them, and charged them: Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying: Because we have taken no bread. Jesus, knowing their concern, O ye of little faith, He saith to them, why do you think within yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not yet know nor understand? Have you still your hearts blinded? Having eyes, see you not; and having ears, hear you not? Neither do you remember, when I broke the five loaves among 5000, how many baskets full of fragments you took up? They say to Him: Twelve. When also the seven loaves among

4000, how many baskets of fragments took you up? They say to Him: Seven. He said to them: Why do you not yet understand that it was not concerning bread that I said to you: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Then they understood that He said not that they should beware of the leaven of the bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

4. THE BLIND MAN AT BETHSAIDA

"From this place, they came to Bethsaida, where they bring to Jesus a blind man, and they besought Him that He would touch him. As this was one of those miracles which He did not wish to make public, and taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the town; and spitting upon his eyes, laying His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. The blind man looking up, said: I see men as it were trees walking. After that again, Jesus laid His hands upon his eyes, and he began to see, and was restored, so that he saw all things clearly. After that, Jesus sent him into his house, saying: Go into thy house, and if thou enter into the town tell nobody. From Bethsaida, Jesus went out with His disciples into the towns in the quarters of Cæsarea Philippi."

CHAPTER XXXIII

CHRIST APPOINTS PETER AS HEAD OF THE CHURCH. HE FORETELLS HIS SUFFERINGS AND EXACTS FROM HIS DISCIPLES SELF-DENIAL AND OPEN PROFESSION OF THEIR FAITH

Matt. xvi. 13-28; Mark viii. 27-39; Luke ix. 18-27

1. ST. PETER RECEIVES THE KEYS OF HEAVEN. THE PAPACY

UNDER the symbol of a rock, which signifies durability and stability; under the symbol of keys, which signify loosing and binding, Jesus Christ imparts to St. Peter the promise of the plenitude of ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

"From Bethsaida Jesus went out with His disciples into the towns in the quarters of Cæsarea Philippi. It came to pass in the way, as He was alone praying, His disciples only were with Him, and He asked them, saying: Whom do men

say that the Son of man is? They said: Some, John the Baptist; some say, Elias, and others, Jeremias; others say that one of the former prophets is risen again. Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven. Jesus then strictly commanded His disciples that they should tell none that He was Jesus the Christ."

Christ had come to unite the whole human race in one family, of whom Peter was chosen by Him to be the head, while we were to be the various members of the mystic body. We were to be a kingdom with Peter for our king. He was to be the corner-stone of the great Christian temple to which were to resort an enlightened congregation of God's children to be taught by an infallible teacher. St. Peter was to be the chief pastor of the united flock of Jews and Gentiles. So that Peter is, in all that regards the Church, the visible Representative of the invisible Saviour who sits at the right hand of his Father in heaven. He was always treated as the Chief of the apostles, and after Christ's resurrection, at the triple profession of his love for his divine Master, Peter's precedence was confirmed. But as the Church of Christ should outlive that generation, and after Peter's death till the end of time, so must the holy office of Peter live in his lawful successors, who are, according to the unanimous testimony of all ages, the Bishops of Rome.

2. ST. PETER FAILS TO COMPREHEND THE MYSTERY OF THE PAINFUL SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

"At that time Jesus began to show to His disciples, and to teach them, that He must go to Jerusalem, must suffer many things, be rejected by the ancients, by the chief-priests and the scribes, be put to death, and after three days rise again. And He spoke the word openly. And Peter, taking Him, began to rebuke Him, saying: Lord, be it far from Thee; this shall not be unto Thee. Jesus therefore turning about, and

seeing His disciples, threatened Peter, saying: Go behind Me, Satan! thou art a scandal unto men, because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men."

St. Peter not having yet been enlightened by the Holy Ghost, could not understand the mystery of Christ's sacrifice of suffering, mentioned now for the first time. Jesus earnestly rebukes him for his worldly notions and warns him and the other apostles that they, too, will be called upon to suffer.

3. SELF-DENIAL AND CONSTANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHRIST

"Jesus calling the multitude together with His disciples, He said to all: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life, will lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel, shall save it: for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For he that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in his majesty, and that of His Father, and that of His holy angels. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then will He render to every man according to his works. Then," addressing His words to His disciples alone, "He said to them: Amen, I say to you, there are some of them that stand here that shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God in power, the Son of man coming in" the splendors of "His kingdom."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix. 1-12; Luke ix. 28-36

BEFORE entering on His passion, and before His disciples should witness the humiliation and degradation of their Master, Christ wished to appear in resplendent and radiant glory on Mount Thabor, in order to comfort and strengthen them and to favor them with a glimpse of the happiness which they would enjoy in the presence of God after they had offered up their sacrifice.

“It came to pass about eight days after these words,” the preceding discourse, “Jesus taketh with Him” His three favorite disciples “Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves to pray. Whilst He was praying, the shape of His countenance was altered, and He was transfigured before them. His face did shine as the sun. His garments became shining and glittering, and exceeding white as the snow, so as no fuller upon earth can make white. Behold there appeared two men who were talking with Him. They were Moses and Elias. Appearing in majesty, they spoke of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep. And waking, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him.

“As Moses and Elias were departing from Jesus, Peter saith to Him: Master, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. He knew not what he said, for he” and his companions “were struck with fear.”

“As he spoke these things, there came a bright cloud which overshadowed them. When they,” Moses and Elias, “entered into the cloud, the apostles were more afraid. And lo, a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. Whilst the voice was uttered, Jesus was found alone. The disciples hearing, were very much afraid, and fell upon their face. But Jesus came and touched them, and said to them: Arise, and fear not. Then lifting up their eyes, and immediately looking about, they saw no one but only Jesus.”

This was the most sublime and most mysterious appearance of the Redeemer during His stay on earth. The eternal Father testifies to Him, the fathers of the old law, Moses and Elias, as well as the fathers of the new, the three principal apostles, receive this testimony with reverential awe, and glorify the Fulfiller of the old law and the Founder of the new. Now is the old law fulfilled. Moses the law-giver, and Elias the leader of the prophets, attest to the completion and fulfilment, in Christ’s death on the cross, of all the figures, sacrifices, and prophecies of the old law. Now is the new covenant established. From the eternal Father Himself the Son of man receives the testimony that He is the Saviour in whom mankind will find their Teacher and Redeemer.

“As they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged His disciples not to tell any man what things they had seen, or the vision, till the Son of man shall be risen again from the dead. They held their peace and told no man in those days any of these things which they had seen. They kept the word to themselves, questioning to one another, what that should mean, When He shall be risen from the dead? And they asked Jesus, saying: Why then do the Pharisees and scribes say that Elias must come first? He answering, said to them: Elias indeed shall come and restore all things, and must suffer many things and be despised, as it is written of the Son of man. But I say to you that Elias is already come, that they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they had a mind, as it is written of him. So also the Son of man shall suffer from them. Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them of John the Baptist.”

CHAPTER XXXV

JESUS CURES THE LUNATIC CHILD, FORETELLS HIS PASSION AND DEATH, AND PAYS THE TRIBUTE FOR HIMSELF AND PETER

Matt. xvii. 14-26; Mark ix. 13-32; Luke ix. 37-45

1. THE POSSESSED BOY, A FIGURE OF INORDINATE PASSION

AGAIN the Holy Evangelists bring before our minds for contemplation and edification, one of the most dismal and appalling pictures of human misery—a person possessed by the devil. Nowhere do we realize more fully the deep fall of man and his dire want of a Redeemer than in these frightful spectacles.

“The day following, when they came down from the mountain, there met Him a great multitude. Jesus coming to His” other “disciples, saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes disputing and questioning with them. All the people seeing Jesus, were astonished and struck with fear. Running to Him, they saluted Him, and He asked them: What do you question about among yourselves? Behold a man among the multitude cried out, falling down on his knees before Him, answering: Master, I have brought to Thee my son having a

dumb spirit. I beseech Thee look upon my son, because he is my only one. Lord, have pity on him, for he is a lunatic, and suffereth much, for he falleth often into the fire, and often into the water. Lo, a spirit seizeth him, he suddenly crieth out: the spirit throweth him down, and dasheth him, so that he foameth and gnasheth with the teeth; and bruising him, the spirit hardly departeth from him, and my son pineth away. I brought him to thy disciples, and I desired them to cast him out, and to heal my son, and they could not."

"Jesus answering, said to them: O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring hither thy son to Me. They brought him. As he was coming and when he had seen Jesus, immediately the spirit troubled him; the devil threw him down, and he rolled about foaming. Jesus asked his father: How long time is it since this happened unto him? From his infancy, said the father; and oftentimes hath the devil cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if Thou canst do anything, help us, having compassion on us. Jesus saith to him: If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Immediately the father of the boy, crying out with tears, said: I do believe; Lord, help my unbelief. When Jesus saw the multitude running together, he threatened the unclean spirit, saying to him: Deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee, go out of him and enter not any more into him. He crying out, and greatly tearing him, went out of him; and the child became as dead, so that many said: He is dead. But Jesus taking him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose; and the child was cured from that hour. Jesus restored him to his father. All were astonished at the mighty power of God, and wondered at all the things Jesus did."

"When Jesus was come into the house, the disciples came secretly to Him, and asked Him: Why could not we cast him out? Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief. They said to the Lord: Increase our faith. The Lord said to them: If you had faith like to a grain of mustard-seed, you might say to this mulberry-tree: Be thou rooted up and be transplanted into the sea, and it would obey you. For, amen, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say to this mountain: Remove from hence hither, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind of demon is not cast out but by prayer and fasting."

2. JESUS FORETELLS HIS SUFFERINGS, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION

“Departing from thence,” from the vicinity of the mountain, where they do not appear to have tarried more than one day, “Jesus and His disciples passed through Galilee; but He would not that any man should know it, for the Jews sought to kill Him. When they abode together in Galilee, while all wondered at all the things He did, He taught His disciples, and said to them: Lay up in your hearts these words: The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. They shall kill Him, and after that He is killed, He shall rise again the third day. But the disciples understood not this word; it was hidden from them, so that they perceived it not; and they were afraid to ask Him concerning this word: they were troubled exceedingly. And they came to Capharnaum.”

3. JESUS PAYS THE TRIBUTE MONEY

Carefully and gradually, like a most anxious parent, our Saviour prepares the disciples, little by little, for the sad days of His humiliation and suffering. And lest even this gradual revelation of the coming trial should weaken their faith, He encourages and comforts them by a manifestation of His great power. Thus, on the occasion of paying the contribution for the temple, a tribute that every Israelite was bound to pay annually, as a sign of his subjection to the law, but to which law Christ, the Son of God, and those whom He had called to the freedom of God, were not subject, He, in order to encourage them, revealed His wonderful power by a miracle.

“And when they were come to Capharnaum, they that received the didrachma¹ came to Peter and said to him: Doth not your Master pay the didrachma? Peter said: Yes. When He was come into the house, Jesus, to whom nothing is unknown, prevented him, saying: What is thy opinion, Simon? The kings of the earth, of whom do they receive tribute or custom? Of their own children or of strangers? Of strangers, he said. Jesus said to him: Then, the children are free? But,” added the Saviour, “that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and that fish which shall first come up, take; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater.² Take that, and give it to them for Me and thee.”

¹This was a tribute paid by the Israelites of full age for the maintenance of the temple and its services. ²A coin worth four drachmas.

CHAPTER XXXVI

JESUS PREACHES ON HUMILITY, PATIENCE, THE SHUNNING OF SCANDAL, BROTHERLY COUNSEL AND FORGIVENESS

Matt. xviii. 1-19; Mark ix. 32-10, 1; Luke ix. 46-50

1. CHILDHOOD'S VIRTUES

“THERE entered a thought into the disciples which of them should be the greater. But Jesus seeing the thoughts of their heart, asked them, when they were in the house at Capharnaum: What did you treat of in the way? But they held their peace, for in the way they had disputed among themselves, which of them should be the greatest. Jesus, sitting down, called the twelve. The disciples came to Him. Jesus said to them: Who, thinkest thou, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all, and the minister of all. And calling unto Him a little child, whom, when He had embraced, He set him in the midst of them.” Then “He saith to them: Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven. And he that shall receive one such little child as this in My name, receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me; for He who is the lesser among you all, He is the greater.”

2. KINDNESS AND SYMPATHY

“And John answering, said to Him: Master, we saw a certain man casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said to him: Forbid him not, for there is no man that doth a miracle in My name and that can soon speak ill of Me. For he that is not against you, is for you. Whosoever shall give you, in My name, a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”

What a tender admonition for us to be lenient and merciful, and not to require too much from our fellow-man.

3. ON SCANDALS

On the other hand, we must combat scandal with vigor. “And whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones

that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanging about his neck, and he were cast into the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of scandals, for it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh. If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell, into the hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. If thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. For every one shall be salted with fire; and every victim shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt become unsavory, wherewith will you season it? Have salt in you, and have peace among you."

The victims sacrificed in the old law were strewn with salt. The cast-off sinner, as a victim of divine justice, will be salted with fire. The Apostles are to endeavor, by the good and wholesome salt of their preaching, to save men from this dreadful fate. They must therefore preserve within themselves the salt of wisdom, and not wrangle imprudently about their respective rank and position.

4. THE VALUE OF THE SOUL

"See," Jesus said to them, "that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. What think you? If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them should go astray, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains, and goeth to seek that which is gone astray? And if it so be that he find it, Amen, I say to you, he rejoiceth more for that, than for the ninety-nine that went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

5. FRATERNAL CORRECTION. ECCLESIASTICAL PENALTIES

"If thy brother shall offend and sin against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear

thee, thou shalt gain thy brother; and if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the church; and if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican. Amen. I say to you: Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."

Christ, in these remarkable words, entrusts His Apostles with the right of inflicting ecclesiastical punishments, a right to be exercised only when love and forbearance have been exhausted. He also prepares His Apostles for the institution, after His resurrection, of the sacrament of Penance.

"Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father who is in heaven; for where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

6. WE MUST FORGIVE. THE HARD-HEARTED SERVANT

"Peter," who desired to be enlightened on this point, "then came unto Jesus, and said: Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times, but till seventy times seven times. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him 10,000 talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant, being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants, that owed him a hundred pence; and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant, falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Now his fellow-servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him, and said to him: Thou wicked ser-

vant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou, then, have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord, being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

This is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. "With what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again" (*Mark* iv. 24). You wish to be freed from the burden of your sins! Then you must first forgive those who have offended you. This is an indispensable condition. You find it hard to pardon a fancied offence against yourself, impossible to treat your enemy with patience and forgiveness! Then first throw yourself upon your knees and begin to reckon up your account with God. Count over the many squandered graces, all the despised warnings of the Holy Ghost, your preference of the creature to the Creator, the exposing of your faculties to the temptations of the devil, your disobedience to the laws of God. Add these all together, and looking to heaven, say, if you dare: "Lord, forgive me my trespasses." Certainly in such a moment, it must become easy for you to forgive your bitterest enemy.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had said these things, rising up from thence, He departed from Galilee, and cometh into the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan, and the multitude flock to Him again. And as He was accustomed, He taught them again and healed their sick."

CHAPTER XXXVII

JESUS IS REJECTED BY THE SAMARITANS. THE DEPARTURE AND RETURN OF THE SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES

Luke ix. 51; x. 24

1. THE INJUDICIOUS ZEAL OF JOHN AND JAMES

"AND it came to pass when the days of His assumption were accomplishing, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. And He sent messengers before His face: and

going they entered into a city of the Samaritans to prepare for Him. And they received Him not, because His face was of one going to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John had seen this, they said: Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? And turning, He rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save. And they went into another town."

The inhabitants of the Samaritan town refused to admit Jesus, not through personal hatred, but owing to a national prejudice which they entertained against the Jewish race in general. It was blindness, and not stubbornness as with the Pharisees.

2. HOW TO FOLLOW JESUS

"And it came to pass as they walked in the way, that a certain man said to Him: I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. But He said to another: Follow Me; and he said: Lord, suffer me first to go, and to bury my father. And Jesus said to him: Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another said: I will follow Thee, Lord, but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house. Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

3. THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY-TWO DISCIPLES

"And after these things the Lord appointed also other seventy-two: and He sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself was to come. And He said to them: The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He send laborers into His harvest. Go: behold I send you as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way. Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house: And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall return to you. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they have: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Remove not from house to house. And into what city soever you enter, and they receive you, eat

such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are therein, and say to them: The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city you enter, and they receive you not, going forth into the streets thereof, say: Even the very dust of your city that cleaveth to us we wipe off against you: yet know this that the kingdom of God is at hand. I say to you, it shall be more tolerable at that day for Sodom than for that city. Woe to thee Corozain, woe to thee Bethsaida: for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou Capharnaum which art exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you, heareth Me: and he that despiseth you despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me.”

Christ here delivers to His seventy-two disciples their commission and rule of conduct, as He had previously given theirs to the Apostles. In a very similar manner had Moses, centuries before, selected the twelve princes of Israel and seventy-two judges, six out of each of the twelve tribes, as his aids and representatives. The number of the Apostles corresponds to the twelve progenitors of Israel; the number of the disciples to the seventy-two nations into which, according to Jewish tradition and the opinion of the fathers, the human race was divided at the time of the dispersion from the tower of Babel.

4. THEIR RETURN

“And the seventy-two returned with joy, saying: Lord, the devils also are subject to us in Thy name. And He said to them: I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven. Behold I have given you power to tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall hurt you. But yet rejoice not in this that spirits are subject unto you: but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven.”

Christ in spirit foresaw how Satan, whom the misguided heathens had honored and worshiped as God, would be cast down from his throne by the death on the cross, and all his power, over those who followed Christ, rendered abortive.

“In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and

said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea Father: for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered to Me by My Father. And no one knoweth who the Son is but the Father: and who the Father is, but the Son, and to whom the Son will reveal Him. And turning to His disciples, He said: Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them: and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE GOOD SAMARITAN. MARTHA AND MARY

Luke x. 25-42

“AND behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting Him, and saying: Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But He said to him: What is written in the law? how readest thou? He answering, said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said to him: Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said to Jesus: And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering, said: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him: and having wounded him went away leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way: and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him: and seeing him was moved with compassion. And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine: and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two pence, and gave to the host, and said: Take care of him: and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay

thee. Which of these three in thy opinion was neighbor to him that fell among the robbers? But he said: He that showed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: Go, and do thou in like manner."

In this parable, the teachers of the Church have discovered not only a lesson of Christian love of neighbor, but also the history of the fall of man and his restoration. "The traveler," says Origen, "is the human race; Jericho is the world; Jerusalem, paradise. The robbers are the three chief enemies of the human family, namely, temptations from without, evil passions from within, and the devil from below. The robbery is the loss of original innocence and supernatural grace. The wounding is the weakened state of the soul in consequence of sin. The priest and the levite are the legislators of the old law. The good Samaritan is Christ. The wine is His redeeming blood; the oil, God's grace. The inn is the Church. The host is the Christian priesthood. The two pieces of money are the holy sacraments, consisting in the twofold quality of outward sign and inward grace. The return of the Samaritan is the second coming of Christ.

"Now it came to pass as they went, that He entered into a certain town: and a certain woman named Martha, received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving: who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Martha represented the active, Magdalen the contemplative life. The first is good, the second is better, but the two united are the best mode of life. Who has ever united within himself these two kinds of life as perfectly as the Blessed Virgin Mary? How many active duties had she to perform in bringing up the child Jesus in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth! How great must have been her care and anxiety concerning her Son in His cruel passion and death! Yet, in the midst of all this outward activity, her soul was buried in contemplation; for she sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His words, and kept all these words in her heart, till at last, on the day of her Assumption, she was relieved of "Martha's part," to devote herself to Mary's portion for all eternity.

CHAPTER XXXIX

PRAYER

Luke xi. 1-13

“AND it came to pass, that as Jesus was in a certain place praying, when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him: Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said to them: When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”

Here we perceive from the Saviour's repetition of this divine prayer already taught and prescribed to the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, how much importance He attached to it, and how ardently He wishes us to present it daily and hourly before the throne of God. With this powerful prayer, we, as it were, do violence to heaven, so that God can not withstand our petition. But we must remember that not the word but the spirit quickeneth; the spirit of unbounded confidence in God and of childlike submission to the will of Him who alone knows what is truly useful and salutary to our condition.

“And Jesus said to them: Which of you shall have a friend and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him. And he from within should answer and say: Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed, I can not rise and give thee. Yet, if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say to you: Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. And which of you, if he ask his father for bread, will he give him a stone? or a fish, will he for a fish, give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he reach him a scorpion? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask Him?”

CHAPTER XL

JESUS CURES A POSSESSED PERSON. BLASPHEMY OF THE JEWS. A WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE EXTOLS THE MOTHER OF JESUS. HE THREATENS THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, AND OTHER UNBELIEVING JEWS

Luke xi. 14-54

1. BLASPHEMIES OF THE JEWS AGAINST CHRIST

“AND He was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb. And when He had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes were in admiration at it. But some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. And others, tempting, asked of Him a sign from heaven. But He seeing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say, that through Beelzebub I cast out devils. Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I by the finger of God cast out devils: doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his court: those things are in peace which he possesseth. But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him: he will take away all his armour wherein he trusted and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with Me is against Me: and He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest: and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”

The Pharisees here, for the third time, attribute Christ's power to the devil. Jesus refutes their reiterated charge as He had done before, and points to the dreadful condition of the once favored people of Israel, who, from being the chosen among the nations, have, on account of their rejection of the Messias, been given up to the dominion of Satan.

2. "BLESSED IS THE WOMB THAT BORE THEE"

"And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck. But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

The voice of a simple and unlettered woman proclaims the praise of God's mother in accents sweet and soft, akin to the angels. The voice of the learned and haughty Pharisee utters blasphemy and execration against God's Son, in the hissing tone of the serpent. How true is the old yet ever new saying: "The poor have the gospel preached to them!" During 1800 years Christendom has re-echoed the greeting of this woman in the gospel, praising and exalting Mary who was deemed worthy to carry the King of heaven and earth near her heart and to suckle Him at her breast. The Church does not neglect the significant reply of our Lord, for she renders to the saints of the heavenly court, who have heard the word of God and kept it with heroic charity, the most loving homage; thus verifying His words, "Blessed are they," etc.

3. THE UNBELIEF OF THE JEWS CONTRASTED WITH THE FAITH OF THE NINIVITES, AND OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA. THE SIGN OF JONAS. THE LIGHT OF THE BODY

"And the multitudes running together, He began to say: This generation is a wicked generation: it asketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign to the Ninivites: so shall the Son of man also be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them: because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold more than Solomon here. The men of Ninive shall rise in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas, and behold more than Jonas here. No man lighteth a candle and putteth it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel: but upon a candlestick, that they that come in may see the light."

The light of wisdom brought from heaven to earth by the true Solomon, Jesus Christ, shines before all men, and he who, with childlike faith, lays himself open to its rays, will enjoy pure and healthy life of soul. But if his eye be dark-

some, that is, if he do not will to have light, he will remain in dark unhealthiness of heart and soul.

“The light of thy body, is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome: but if it be evil, thy body also will be darksome. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If then thy whole body be lightsome, having no part of darkness, the whole shall be lightsome, and as a bright lamp shall enlighten thee.”

4. THE OUTWARD STRICTNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

The greater part of the scribes and Pharisees of that time failed to enjoy this enlightenment. They were the blind leading the blind. For, in their ambition to become the wise guides in Israel, they attended only to the strict letter of the law and to the outward observance of customs and ceremonies, and thus held the people back from the true, living, spiritual knowledge of God, as preached by the prophets.

“And as He was speaking, a certain Pharisee prayed Him that He would dine with him. And He going in sat down to eat. And the Pharisee began to say thinking within himself, why He was not washed before dinner. And the Lord said to him: Now you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter: but your inside is full of rapine and iniquity. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without, make also that which is within? But yet that which remaineth, give alms: and behold all things are clean unto you. But woe to you Pharisees, because you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over judgment and the charity of God: now these things you ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

It is false to assert, as some do, that Christ trampled under foot all obedience to human institutions, and required of His followers observance of the divine law only. Of course, the commandments which come immediately and directly from God constitute the first and highest law, from which there can never be exemption. But also the laws framed by the authorities in the Church and State must be obeyed. “These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone.” It would certainly be sinful for a man to plead a civil or ecclesiastical law in excuse for violation of God’s law.

“Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market-place. Woe to you, because you are as sepulchers that appear not,

and men that walk over are not aware. And one of the lawyers answering, saith to Him: Master, in saying these things, Thou reproachest us also. But He said: Wo to you lawyers also: because you load men with burdens which they can not bear, and you yourselves touch not the packs with one of your fingers. Wo to you who build the monuments of the prophets: and your fathers killed them. Truly you bear witness that you consent to the doings of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and you build their sepulchers. For this cause also the wisdom of God said: I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute: That the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias who was slain between the altar and the temple. Yea, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. Wo to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in you have hindered. And as He was saying these things to them, the Pharisees and the lawyers began vehemently to urge Him, and to oppress His mouth about many things. Lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch something from His mouth, that they might accuse Him.”

CHAPTER XLI

SEVERAL RULES OF CONDUCT FOR THE DISCIPLES. ON CONTEMPT FOR WORLDLY GOODS, AND ON WATCHFULNESS

Luke xii. 1-59

1. SHUNNING SCANDAL. FORTITUDE IN PERSECUTION

“AND when great multitudes stood about Him, so that they trod one upon another, He began to say to His disciples: Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed: nor hidden that shall not be known. For whatsoever things you have spoken in darkness, shall be published in the light: and that which you have spoken in the ear in the chambers, shall be preached on the house-tops. And I say to you, my friends:

Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will shew you whom ye shall fear: fear ye Him who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea I say to you, fear Him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows. And I say to you: Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that shall deny Me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him: but to him that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they shall bring you into the synagogues, and to magistrates and powers, be not solicitous how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what you must say."

2. CONTEMPT FOR WORLDLY GOODS. THE DIVISION OF THE INHERITANCE. THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN WHO DIED SUDDENLY. SOLICITUDE ABOUT TEMPORAL WANTS

The evangelical courage required by the divine Master in His disciples is a result of evangelical poverty. The true servant of Christ will be able to fight in the cause of truth and justice with unshaken fortitude, only when he shall have detached his heart from the goods of earth, and placed his whole trust for the body's necessities in the hand of God.

"And one of the multitude said to Him: Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me. But He said to him: Man, who hath appointed Me judge or divider over you? And He said to them: Take heed and beware of all covetousness: for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth. And He spoke a similitude to them, saying: The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits: and he thought within himself, saying: What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said: This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and will build greater: and into them will I gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods, and I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer. But

God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And He said to His disciples: Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat: nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat, and the body is more than the raiment. Consider the ravens, for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they store-house nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much are you more valuable than they? And which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If then you be not able to do so much as the least thing, why are you solicitous for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin: but I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. Now if God clothe in this manner the grass that is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith? And seek not you what you shall eat or what you shall drink: and be not lifted up on high: for all these things do the nations of the world seek. But your Father knoweth that you have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom. Sell what you possess and give alms. Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not: where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Such are the sublime principles of Christ, the like of which had never before been uttered by any tongue. Who will be able to observe them? Who will have strength in persecution to keep valiantly his peace of soul as Christ requires? Who will have freedom enough of soul to be lifted above all attachment to worldly goods, as the Saviour demands by word and His own example? Only He in whose heart is burning fire from above; only He who continually directs the gaze of His soul to that great day on which pure and self-sacrificing souls will obtain their promised and over-adequate reward. This day will come for you and me and for every individual, at the hour of death; but for all in general and together at the end of time. Watch, and in all thou hast to do, to offer, and to suffer, remember the judgment day. Hence our Lord says:

3. ON PREPARATION FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. THE VIGILANT SERVANT AND THE NEGLIGENT SERVANT

“Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands. And you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching: Amen I say to you, that He will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat and passing will minister unto them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But this know ye, that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you then also ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come. And Peter said to Him: Lord, dost Thou speak this parable to us, or likewise to all? And the Lord said: Who, thinkest thou, is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord setteth over his family to give them their measure of wheat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom, when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing. Verily, I say to you, he will set him over all that he possesseth. But if that servant shall say in his heart: My lord is long a coming: and shall begin to strike the men-servants and maid-servants, and to eat, and to drink, and be drunk: the lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not, and at the hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him, and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers. And that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more. I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled? And I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished? Think ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you no, but separation. For there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three shall they be divided: the father against the son, and the son against his father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against her daughter-

in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And He said also to the multitudes: When you see a cloud rising from the west, presently you say: A shower is coming: and so it happeneth; and when ye see the south wind blow you say: There will be heat: and it cometh to pass. You hypocrites, you know how to discern the face of the heaven and of the earth: but how is it that you do not discern this time? And why even of yourselves do you not judge that which is just? And when thou goest with thy adversary to the prince, whilst thou art in the way endeavor to be delivered from him, lest perhaps he draw thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the exactor, and the exactor cast thee into prison. I say to thee, thou shalt not go out thence, until thou pay the very last mite."

Thus should the flame of holy zeal and of fervent charity which animated the soul of Jesus, communicate its fire to all men; inciting them to a love of truth and justice. The grace-treasure of Pentecost, purchased for us by His bitter death on the cross, will light up within us this supernatural charity. Far be it from us to mistake the nature of this love, which should pervade the world in Christ. With the sensual love of the worldling, with the false, dishonorable peace of the world, it has nothing in common. It consists essentially of truth and justice. Hence, between it and the spirit of this world the conflict will last till the end of time.

CHAPTER XLII

EXHORTATION TO PENANCE. THE PARABLE OF THE FIG-TREE. THE HEALING OF THE CROOKED WOMAN ON THE SABBATH. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD-SEED AND OF THE LEAVEN. THE NUMBER OF THE DAMNED. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Luke xiii. 1-15

1. THE LOSS OF THE UNREPENTANT. THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE

"AND there were present at that very time some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answering, said to them: Think you that these Galileans were sinners above all the men of Galilee,

because they suffered such things? No, I say to you: but unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower fell in Siloe, and slew them; think you that they also were debtors above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? No, I say to you: but except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish. He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none. And he said to the dresser of the vineyard: Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none: cut it down therefore: why cumbereth it the ground? But he answering, said to him: Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and dung it: and if happily it bear fruit: but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

2. THE CROOKED WOMAN A FIGURE OF THE SINNER

"And He was teaching in their synagogue on the Sabbaths. And behold there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years: and she was bowed together, neither could she look upwards at all. Whom when Jesus saw, He called her unto Him, and said to her: Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity. And He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God."

In this deformed creature bowed down to the earth, we can view ourselves! To God, in His celestial kingdom, where truth sits enthroned and where unutterable happiness is in store for all who serve the Lord, we dare not raise our eyes. Long years spent in pursuit of earthly pleasures have tied us down, soul and body, to the ground. And yet our immortal soul was not created for the slime of the earth, nor can all the wealth and splendor of this world satisfy its cravings. As man's body has been created upright, with his countenance looking toward the skies, so too was our soul created and designed for the world above. Hence it is miserable and unhappy whilst the bands of sin hold it down to earth. That woman was afflicted for eighteen years! Even the power of a habit of many years' standing will be broken at the word of pardon that comes from Jesus' lips.

"And the ruler of the synagogue (being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath) answering, said to the multitude: Six days there are wherein you ought to work: in them therefore come, and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day. And the Lord answering him, said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every



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one of you on the Sabbath-day loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead them to water? And ought not this daughter of Abraham whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day? And when He said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the things that were gloriously done by Him.”

3. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD-SEED AND THE LEAVEN

“He said therefore: To what is the kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and cast into his garden, and it grew, and became a great tree: and the birds of the air lodged in the branches thereof. And again he said: Whereunto shall I esteem the kingdom of God to be like? It is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

The kingdom of Christ—of grace and truth—will flourish far and wide; and like a stately tree, it will shelter the human family beneath its vivifying branches. And yet the number of those who will pass safely through this terrestrial kingdom of truth and grace, to the realms of eternal happiness, will be, as Christ had already affirmed, very small; small in proportion to the lavish expenditure of saving grace; small in proportion to the earnest and longing desire of the Good Shepherd, who wishes to gather all the lost sheep into one fold; small in proportion to the vast realms of everlasting joy to which all are called in Christ. Our souls shudder at the sight of this small number of the saved, and recall the admonition to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. But we are encouraged when we remember the consoling words of St. James: “Mercy exalteth itself above justice” (*St. James* ii. 13).

4. THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE SAVED. DAY OF JUDGMENT. HEROD, THE FOX. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

“And He went through the cities and towns teaching, and making His journey to Jerusalem. And a certain man said to Him: Lord, are they few that are saved? But He said to them: Strive to enter by the narrow gate: for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. But when the master of the house shall be gone in, and shall shut to the door, you shall begin to stand without, and knock at the

door, saying: Lord, open to us: and He answering shall say to you: I know you not whence you are: Then you shall begin to say: We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. And He shall say to you: I know you not whence you are: depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth: when you shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And there shall come from the east and the west and the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold they are last that shall be first, and they are first that shall be last. The same day there came some of the Pharisees, saying to Him: Depart and get thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill Thee. And He said to them: Go, and tell that fox: Behold I cast out devils, and do cures to-day and to-morrow,¹ and the third day I am consummated. Nevertheless I must walk to-day and to-morrow and the day following: because it can not be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not? Behold your house shall be left to you desolate. And I say to you, that you shall not see Me till the time come when you shall say: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

CHAPTER XLIII

JESUS CURES THE DROPSICAL MAN ON THE SABBATH, AND PREACHES HUMILITY AND MERCY.

THE PARABLES OF THE GREAT SUPPER, THE UNFINISHED TOWER, AND WAR; OF THE STRAY SHEEP, THE LOST DRACHMA, THE PRODIGAL SON, AND THE DISHONEST STEWARD

Luke xiv.; xv.; xvi. 13

1. THE CASE OF DROPSY. THE PHARISEES' HYPOCRISY IN REGARD TO THE SABBATH. THE PRIDE OF THE PHARISEES. THEY SEEK HIGH PLACES

“AND it came to pass when Jesus went into the house of

¹That is to say, in a short time my hour to die upon the cross shall come.

one of the chief of the Pharisees on the Sabbath-day to eat bread, that they watched Him. And behold there was a certain man before Him that had the dropsy. And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? But they held their peace. But He taking him, healed him, and sent him away. And answering them, He said: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath-day? And they could not answer Him to these things. And He spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them: When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honorable than thou be invited by him. And he that invited thee and him come and say to thee: Give this man place: and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place: that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say to thee: Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee: because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.”

2. SELF-SEEKING OF THE PHARISEES

“And He said to him also that had invited Him: When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy neighbors who are rich: lest perhaps they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made to thee; but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. And thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense: for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just.”

3. THE PARABLE OF THE SUPPER. THE REJECTION OF THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees, in their pride and vanity, considered themselves the just and righteous. Hence they understood the words of Christ regarding the resurrection of the just as concerning only themselves and perhaps the people of Israel in general. In their blindness they could not discover that they had been unworthy to receive the Messias, and, as a consequence, merited their exclusion from God's kingdom. Christ

proceeds in a very significant parable to foreshadow the rejection of the Hebrew nation and the election of the Gentiles.

“When one of them that sat at table with Him, had heard these things, he said to Him: Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. But He said to him: A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them: I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I can not come. And the servant returning told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city: and bring in hither the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges: and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of my supper.”

4. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION. PARABLES OF THE WAR AND TOWER BEGAN WITH INSUFFICIENT MEANS

Jesus here contrasts the pretended sanctity of the Pharisees with true Christian perfection, addressing himself in the two following parables to those who believe themselves called to be preachers of the gospel, or as religious, to a high degree of perfection. How great the requirements of such a state! They must be ready to “hate” everything earthly, even their nearest friends and relations, that is, to prefer Christ before them, and to forsake them. In every age of the Church have existed noble souls in search of perfection. Remember the Christian missionaries, the Brothers and Sisters devoting the life and energy of their bodies, all the powers of their loving souls, to the prisoners, the orphans, the unlettered children, and yet receiving at the hands of men only contempt and persecution in return. Such souls are the bright and fragrant blossoms on the tree of Christianity. They are the salt of the earth. Those who believe that they are called to this state

of perfection must first test the firmness of their purpose, and the measure of their abilities, lest they become a scandal, like the man in the gospel who was unable to finish the tower.

“And there went great multitudes with Him: and turning, He said to them: If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be My disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me can not be My disciple. For which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it. Lest after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king about to go to make war against another king, doth not first sit down and think whether he be able with 10,000 to meet him that with 20,000 cometh against him? Of else whilst the other is yet afar off, sending an embassy, he desireth conditions of peace. So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, can not be My disciple. Salt is good. But if the salt shall lose its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither profitable for the land, nor for the dung-hill, but shall be cast out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

5. THE PARABLE OF THE STRAY SHEEP. THE LOST DRACHMA

In the parables of the stray sheep, of the lost drachma, and of the prodigal son, is presented to us the sweetly consoling gospel-message of divine mercy, that is, the inexpressible longing of Christ for the conversion of sinners and the benignant goodness with which He goes in quest of lost souls, finding and saving them.

“Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And He spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing. And coming home call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one

sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. Or what woman having ten groats: if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently, until she find it? And when she hath found it, call together her friends and neighbors, saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost? So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.

6. THE PRODIGAL SON

And He said: A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after the younger son gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field, and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said to him: Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. And he was angry and would not go in. His father therefore coming out,

began to intreat him. And he answering, said to his father: Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. But he said to him: Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine: But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again: he was lost, and is found."

Gladly would I, like the prodigal son, throw myself into thy arms and be thy child once more. By my sins I have been exiled from thee, am become friendless, homeless, yet ever yearning for reconciliation and peace. How can I return? I will arise from degrading sinfulness, begin a better life, become a new man. I will learn to hate what I have hitherto loved, sensuality; and will shun it forevermore. What I have hitherto so carefully avoided, the cross of self-denial, I will now seek and embrace. How can I do this? Behold, unhappy soul, so long a prisoner in the meshes of bad, vicious habits! your Saviour comes to meet you. He knows the wretchedness of your condition. Be not embarrassed, but listen to His counsel. What He asks of you to do in the first place is easy and simple, and the rest will follow of itself and in its own time. To pave the way for your change of life you need preventing grace. How easily you can obtain it! Do some good deed to the poor and helpless for Jesus' sake, and you have it. You have money, then give alms. You have spare time, visit the sick. You have talent, use it for the advancement of some good Christian work. Do this but for a short time, and, unnoticed by yourself, your conversion will begin. Helped by God's grace you will find less difficulty in your conversion and sanctification than you suppose. If you have hitherto squandered in vice the goods and talents entrusted to you, the wise use that you will now make of them for the poor and needy will save you. This is the meaning of the following parable.

7. THE UNJUST STEWARD

"And He said also to His disciples: There was a certain rich man who had a steward: and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said to him: How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account

of thy stewardship: for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself: What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first: How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said: An hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another: And how much dost thou owe? Who said: An hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him: Take thy bill and write eighty. And the lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely: for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity: that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings."

Remember that our Lord does not commend the dishonesty of the steward, but simply recommends us to use some such shrewdness in making friends, by doing acts of kindness with material goods. So that those needy ones whom we benefit may be able to befriend and assist us; for Christ had already said "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and it may be by their very prayers that its doors shall be opened to us.

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater: and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater. If then you have not been faithful in the unjust mammon: who will trust you with that which is the true? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's: who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other: you can not serve God and mammon."

The Pharisees and the other wealthy Jews had proved unfaithful in what of itself is small and trifling, and foreign to the nature and destiny of the soul, namely, the disposition of material goods. They had employed them, not to the advantage of the poor and needy, but to gratify their own avarice. Hence they must not now expect to share in those truly noble and valuable goods which respond to the innermost nature and wants of the human soul, namely, truth and grace in Christ.

This is the curse that always overtakes the wealthy who do not out of their abundance assist their fellow-man, especially the poor.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH GLUTTON AND THE BEGGAR. ON THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE. ADMONITIONS

Matt. xix. 3-12; Mark x. 2-12; Luke xvi. 14-17, 10

1. LAZARUS AND DIVES

“Now the Pharisees who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided Him. And He said to them: You are they who justify yourselves before men: but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is high to men, is an abomination before God. The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every one useth violence toward it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen: and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table, and no one did give him: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. And the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said: Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented; and besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, can not, nor from thence come hither. And he said: Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest

they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them. But he said: No, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead."

2. THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE

"There came to Jesus the Pharisees tempting Him, and they asked Him, saying: Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? He answering saith to them: What did Moses command you? Have ye not read that he who made man from the beginning, made them male and female? and he said: For this cause shall man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

"They say to Him: Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce and to put away? Jesus answered and saith to them: Because of the hardness of your heart, Moses wrote you that precept, and permitted you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.

"And in the house again His disciples asked Him concerning the same thing. And He saith to them: I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery against her: and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery. And if the wife shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

Christ had already, in His Sermon on the Mount, established the indissolubility of the marriage tie, adding that the union made by a divorced party is no marriage, but simply an adulterous union which a sincere woman may and must abandon. Christian marriage must be indissoluble: for what would otherwise become of the tender, weak, and helpless wife, if her husband, with a view to another matrimonial alliance, should be tempted to forsake her? Christian marriage must be indissoluble: otherwise what would become of the education and bringing up of children and of the family, which is the keystone of society and of the state? Certainly much and frequent sorrow is to be found among married people, springing from infirmity, from the levity or harshness of one or the other party. But just to meet this state of

affairs, our blessed Lord raised matrimony to the dignity and efficacy of a sacrament; upon receiving which worthily, all those graces are added which are requisite and sufficient to enable married persons to bear the matrimonial cross with patience and merit.

3. CELIBACY

“Then His disciples said to Him: If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry. He saith to them: All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, who were born so from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made so by men: and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take, let him take it.”

Certainly the unmarried state of those who remain so voluntarily, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, is the state most perfect and most pleasing to God. But those, too, to whom marriage becomes impossible, either from an absence of good appearance, from poverty, sickness, the wickedness or neglect of men, may acquire much merit in their involuntary celibacy, if, submitting with patience and resignation, they preserve their souls from all unchaste thoughts and desires, and await with joyous hope the coming of the heavenly bridegroom. Envy not the good fortune of those who are well married. It is not always good. Are you unmarried, then recall to mind frequently and seriously the words of St. Paul: “But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they continue even as I. Now, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give counsel” (1 *Cor.* vii.). Those who marry do well; but those who do not, do better. Remember also, that as abundant graces are given to enable the unmarried to live chastely, scandals arising from the defilement of this holy state are shocking. Grace will be given only to him who prays fervently and perseveringly for it.

4. ON SCANDAL

“And Jesus said to His disciples: It is impossible that scandals should not come: but woe to him through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones.

“Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother sin against thee, reprove him: and if he do penance, forgive him. And if he

sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day be converted unto thee, saying, I repent: forgive him.

“And the apostles said to the Lord: Increase our faith. And the Lord said: If you had faith like to a grain of mustard-seed, you might say to this mulberry-tree: Be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea: and it would obey you.

“Which of you having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say to him when he is come from the field: Immediately go sit down to meat: and will not rather say to him: Make ready my supper, and gird thyself and serve me whilst I eat and drink, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant for doing the things which he commanded him? I think not. So you also when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which we ought to do.”

Our Saviour merely alludes to the rough and hasty treatment of their servants by the Jews, in order to speak his parable, and not to approve of such treatment. He merely adverts to existing facts, and draws therefrom this exhortation to Christian humility.

CHAPTER XLV

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES IN JERUSALEM

Luke xvii. 11; John vii. 2-53

1. JESUS REPAIRS TO JERUSALEM WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS FRIENDS

“AND it came to pass, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem, He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. And His brethren said to Him: Pass from hence and go into Judea: that Thy disciples also may see Thy works which Thou dost. For there is no man that doth anything in secret, and He Himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, manifest Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him. Then Jesus said to them: My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world can not

hate you; but Me it hateth, because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go you up to this festival day, but I go¹ not up to this festival day; because My time is not accomplished. When He had said these things, He Himself stayed in Galilee.

“But after His brethren were gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but, as it were, in secret. The Jews therefore sought Him on the festival day, and said: Where is He? And there was much murmuring among the multitude concerning Him. For some said: He is a good man. And others said: No; but He seduceth the people. Yet no man spoke openly of Him, for fear of the Jews,” that is, before the elders of the Jews, and the scribes and chief-priests.

2. HE TEACHES IN THE TEMPLE

“Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews wondered, saying: How doth this man know letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them and said: My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do the will of Him he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of Him that sent Him, he is true and there is no injustice in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why seek ye to kill Me?”

“The multitude answered and said: Thou hast a devil; who seeketh to kill Thee? Jesus answered and said to them: One work I have done and you all wonder: Therefore Moses gave you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers), and on the Sabbath-day you circumcise a man. If a man receive circumcision on the Sabbath-day, that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry at Me, because I have healed the whole man on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment.”

3. CHRIST IS SENT BY THE FATHER

“Some therefore of Jerusalem said: Is not this He whom they seek to kill? And behold He speaketh openly, and they say nothing to Him. Have the rulers known for a truth that this is the Christ? But we know this man whence He is: but

¹That is to say, I go not yet; not to the opening of the festival, but on the third day; and privately, without you.

when the *Christ* cometh, no man knoweth whence He is. Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying: You both know Me and you know whence I am: and I am not come of Myself; but He that sent Me is true, whom you know not. I know Him, because I am from Him, and He hath sent Me.”

4. THE PHARISEES AND CHIEF PRIESTS SEEK TO CAPTURE JESUS

“They sought therefore to apprehend Him, and no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come. But of the people, many believed in Him and said: When the *Christ* cometh, shall He do more miracles than these which this man doth? The Pharisees heard the people murmuring these things concerning Him: and the rulers and Pharisees sent ministers to apprehend Him. Jesus therefore said to them: Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to Him that sent Me. You shall seek Me and shall not find Me: and where I am thither you can not come. The Jews therefore said among themselves: Whither will He go that we shall not find Him? will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What is this saying that He hath said: You shall seek Me, and you shall not find Me; and where I am, you can not come?”

“And on the last great day of the festivity, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, *Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. Now this He said of the spirit which they should receive who believed in Him: for as yet the spirit was not given, because Jesus was not glorified. Of that multitude, therefore, when they had heard these words of His, some said: This is the prophet indeed. Others said: This is the *Christ*. But some said: Doth the *Christ* come out of Galilee? Doth not the Scripture say: That *Christ* cometh out of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the town where David was? So there arose a dissension among the people because of Him. And some of them would have apprehended Him; but no man laid hands upon Him.”

“The ministers therefore came to the chief-priests and the Pharisees. And they said to them: Why have you not brought Him? The ministers answered: Never did man speak like this man. The Pharisees therefore answered them: Are you also seduced? Hath any one of the rulers believed in Him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed.”

5. NICODEMUS DEFENDS JESUS. THE UNBELIEF OF THE LEADERS

“Nicodemus said to them, he that came to him by night, who was one of them: Doth our law judge any man, unless it first hear him, and know what he doth? They answered and said to him: Art thou also a Galilean? Search the Scriptures, and see that out of Galilee a prophet riseth not. And every man returned to his own house.”

The incredulity of the high-priests and Pharisees, so offensively expressed eighteen centuries ago, bears strong resemblance to the unbelief of the so-called enlightened infidels of our times. Many of the learned and better class, it is true, had given adhesion to our Saviour, and humbly accepted His doctrine and precepts. These were some rich public officers, the centurion who humbly deemed himself unworthy of the presence of Christ, Lazarus and his sisters, and the lawyers Nathaniel and Nicodemus. In general, however, it was the simple and the lowly who followed Christ, whilst the so-called respectable class, in their jealousy and unbelief, sought to turn the multitude against Him; and if one of themselves, like Nicodemus, ventured to say a word in His defence, they loaded him with abuse and insult. Verily, then as to-day, the words held good, “The poor have the gospel preached to them.”

Whence is this? Why do we meet among the so-called enlightened and self-styled respectable classes, among the wealthy and the influential, so many incredulous, lukewarm, and weak-kneed Catholics? So many bitter enemies of Christ and His Church? The cause is twofold: on the one hand, pride; and on the other, inordinate enjoyment of this life, or sensuality.

Their pride will not permit them to submit their reason to the yoke of faith, and, like common people, believe religious mysteries beyond their comprehension. As they are above ordinary mortals in point of knowledge, position, and influence, it behooves their vanity and self-importance to hold themselves better than common folks in the affair of religion, and to condemn their opinions and their faith as childish fancies: flattering their own diminutive souls that they have flown high above this low standard of intellect. Having acquired much knowledge and learning, they therefore become accustomed to put such great, unquestioned, and unquestionable confidence in their own wonderful intellects that they fear to give assent to any truth transcending their powerful

understandings. They do not notice that there is a difference between natural and supernatural truth, and forget completely the melancholy aberrations of man's intellect whenever he was left to his own resources, or to the bright revelations of his own god, his own dear and darling self.

Their pride will not permit them to accept saving truth from the lips, nor saving grace in the sacraments, from the hands of mortal men, whose superiors they may be in worldly cunning and general information. The priest, as servant of Christ and of His Church, must exact from those entrusted to his care, faith and obedience in spiritual matters, and, like the Baptist of old, must reprove the refined, civilized, and enlightened vices of the rich as well as the vulgar sins of the lower orders. Let the priest, with bleeding heart and compelled by stern duty, act thus, and lo! they, in their enlightenment and urbanity, accuse him of intolerable presumption, arrogance, and ecclesiastical pride. Then they contemptuously turn their backs upon his ministrations, and filled with hatred and rancor, too often, alas! for their own good, but to the relief and credit of the Church, they leave it and God together.

Finally, their pride forbids them to profess their faith before an enlightened circle of friends and acquaintances, and hence they can not practise its requirements. How dreadful to be wanting in the spirit of civilization and progress! Many a one begins without a serious thought to speak against truth, whilst, in his heart, he thinks differently and knows better. But often this human respect, this treason to Christ, brings its own punishment upon him, so that gradually and imperceptibly unbelief gripes his very heart, and he unhappily winds up in the end by becoming in reality what he was at first only in pretence and out of vanity, a downright infidel.

The second reason why so many of the upper classes ape the Scribes and Pharisees and fall into infidelity and hatred of Christ and His Church, is their inordinate attachment to their wealth, which is nearly always entirely, or at least in part, unlawful and ill-gotten. Its possessors, therefore, in order to have peace with Jesus and their own consciences, must make restitution. To avoid this unpleasant duty, these unfortunate people seek an escape by a wholesale denial of Christ and His holy law. Even if they have lawfully acquired their wealth, its possession, preservation, increase, and

use, hold such exclusive claim upon their hearts and souls, that all relish for spiritual things, for eternity, and for God Himself, is totally lost. Religious sentiment is smothered in luxury. Behold the dangers of riches, and of everything great and grand in worldly eyes!

CHAPTER XLVI

CHRIST PARDONS THE WOMAN CHARGED WITH ADULTERY. HE TEACHES AGAIN IN THE TEMPLE. THE JEWS ATTEMPT TO STONE HIM

John viii. 1-59

1. JESUS PARDONS THE WOMAN CHARGED WITH ADULTERY

“JESUS then went unto Mount Olivet. And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him, and sitting down He taught them. And the Scribes and Pharisees bring unto Him a woman taken in adultery: and they set her in the midst. And said to Him: Master, this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest Thou? And this they said tempting Him, that they might accuse Him. But Jesus, bowing Himself down, wrote with His finger on the ground. When therefore they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again stooping down, He wrote on the ground. But they hearing this, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest: and Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus lifting up Himself, said to her: Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more.”

Glorious wisdom of our Redeemer! How with a single word it silences the malicious accusers, and brings their treacherous plottings to shame! Compassionate love of our Saviour! How it leads this poor fallen woman to perfect sorrow for her sins, frees her not only from the temporal penalty of her crime, but also from the eternal guilt!

2. HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. THE FATHER'S TESTIMONY

“Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said to Him: Thou givest testimony of Thyself: Thy testimony is not true. Jesus answered, and said to them: Although I give testimony of Myself, My testimony is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but you know not whence I come, or whither I go. You judge according to the flesh: I judge not any man: And if I do judge, My judgment is true: because I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me. And in your law it is written, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that give testimony of Myself: and the Father that sent Me, giveth testimony of Me. They said therefore to Him: Where is Thy Father? Jesus answered: Neither Me do you know, nor My Father: if you did know Me, perhaps you would know My Father also. These words Jesus spoke in the treasury teaching in the temple: and no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come.”

3. JESUS SPEAKS OF HIS DEATH. THE PHARISEES WILL DIE IN THEIR SINS

“Again therefore Jesus said to them: I go, and you shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sin. Whither I go you can not come. The Jews therefore said: Will He kill Himself, because He said: Whither I go you can not come? And He said to them: You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sin. They said therefore to Him: Who art Thou? Jesus said to them: The beginning, who also speak unto you. Many things I have to speak and to judge of you; but He that sent Me is true: and the things I have heard of Him, these same I speak in the world. And they understood not that He called God His Father. Jesus therefore said to them: When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He and that I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father hath taught Me, these things I speak. And He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone: for I do always the things that please Him.”

As the hour of the bloody sacrifice of reconciliation draws

near, the plainer and more glorious become the manifestations of Christ. He is the light of the world, the fair and just judge, the omnipotent source and beginning of all things, and the one by whom all things have been made. He is the ambassador of God the Father, the Son of God, who was before Abraham. Each day His words are stronger and more severe, as called forth by the persistent incredulity and opposition of His enemies.

4. CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM. CHILDREN OF GOD. CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL

“When He spoke these things many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him: If you continue in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed: and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him: We are the seed of Abraham, and we have never been slaves to any man: how sayest Thou: You shall be free? Jesus answered them: Amen, amen I say unto you: that whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. Now the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth for ever: If therefore the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are the children of Abraham: but you seek to kill Me, because My word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father; and you do the things that you have seen with your father. They answered and said to Him: Abraham is our father. Jesus saith to them: If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a man who have spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God: this Abraham did not. You do the works of your father. They said therefore to Him: We are not born of fornication: we have one Father, even God. Jesus therefore said to them: If God were your Father, you would indeed love Me: for from God I proceeded, and came: for I came not of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not know My speech? Because you can not hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because truth is not in him: when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But if I say the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you shall convince Me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God, heareth the

words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.”

5. THE JEWS ATTEMPT TO STONE JESUS BECAUSE HE CLAIMED TO BE GREATER THAN ABRAHAM

“The Jews therefore answered and said to Him: Do not we say well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered: I have not a devil: but I honor My Father, and you have dishonored Me. But I seek not My own glory: there is One that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen I say to you: if any man keep My word, he shall not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and Thou sayest: If any man keep My word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost Thou make Thyself? Jesus answered: If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing: it is My Father that glorifieth Me, of whom you say that He is your God. And you have not known Him, but I know Him: and if I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know Him, and do keep His word. Abraham your father rejoiced that He might see My day: he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to Him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”

CHAPTER XLVII

THE BLIND MAN CURED ON THE SABBATH-DAY. JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John ix. 1; x.

1. THE BLIND MAN RECEIVES HIS SIGHT

AS LIGHT, by its brightness, illumines our way and cheers our hearts, so did our Saviour seek to enlighten the Jews by the guiding rays of truth, and to attract them to Himself by the gentle brightness of His charity for men. When this treatment proved unavailing, He permitted His divine majesty

and dignity to flash like the lightning upon them, so that they stood dazzled to blindness. A well deserved judgment it was.

It is not, however, by any means, the final and irrevocable sentence. God wishes not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. Once again He exhibits His usual compassion and mercy, and although He did not succeed in softening the hard hearts of the Jews, He shows them a proof of His readiness and eagerness to cure their persistent blindness of soul.

“And Jesus passing by, saw a man who was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him: Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work; as long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had said these things, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him: Go, wash in the pool of Siloe (which is interpreted, Sent). He went therefore and washed, and he came seeing. The neighbors, therefore, and they who had seen him before that he was a beggar, said: Is not this he that sat, and begged? Some said: This is he. But others said: No, but he is like him. But he said: I am he. They said therefore to him: How were thy eyes opened? He answered: That man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me: Go to the pool of Siloe, and wash. And I went. I washed, and I see. And they said to him: Where is He? He saith: I know not.”

2. THE PHARISEES TAKE OFFENSE

“They bring him that had been blind, to the Pharisees. Now it was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Again therefore the Pharisees asked him, how he had received his sight. But he said to them: He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and I see. Some therefore of the Pharisees said: This man is not of God, who keepeth not the Sabbath. But others said: How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say therefore to the blind man again: What sayest thou of Him that hath opened thy eyes? And he said: He is a

prophet. The Jews then did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight, and asked them, saying: Is this your son who you say was born blind? How then doth he now see? His parents answered them, and said: We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but how he now seeth, we know not: or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: ask himself: he is of age, let him speak for himself. These things his parents said, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had already agreed among themselves that if any man should confess him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore did his parents say: He is of age, ask him. They therefore called the man again that had been blind, and said to him: Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner. He said therefore to them: If he be a sinner I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. They said then to him: What did He to thee? How did He open thy eyes? He answered them: I have told you already, and you have heard: why would you hear it again? will you also become His disciples? They reviled him therefore, and said: Be thou His disciple: but we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses: but as to this man, we know not from whence He is. The man answered, and said to them: Why herein is a wonderful thing that you know not from whence He is, and He hath opened my eyes. Now we know that God doth not hear sinners: but if a man be a server of God, and doth His will, him He heareth. From the beginning of the world it hath not been heard, that any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind. Unless this man were of God, He could not do any thing. They answered, and said to him: Thou wast wholly born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out."

Compare the actions of the simple yet sensible and shrewd man who had recovered his eyesight, to the deep-designing yet foolish wisdom of the Pharisees. What a contrast! Again they do not want to believe in the miracle; it can not have been such. It would not be to their interest to admit it, and they must devise some plausible reason for denying it. What poverty of invention in their minds! "He who would desecrate the Sabbath-day by curing a blind man, is a sinner; not of God, therefore not a prophet, and of course not the Christ." So they reason. And this is the extent of their

logic. Yet it is sufficient to induce the Pharisees to close their eyes and become voluntarily blind to a fact attested by the blind man, proved by his parents, and witnessed by the general public.

3. THE BLIND MAN SEES JESUS AND ADORES HIM AS THE SON OF GOD; WHILE THOSE WHO SEE, THAT IS, THE PHARISEES, BECOME SPIRITUALLY BLIND

“Jesus heard that they had cast the blind man out, and when He had found him, He said to him: Dost thou believe in the Son of God? He answered, and said: Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him? And Jesus said to him: Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said: I believe, Lord. And falling down, he adored Him. And Jesus said: For judgment I am come into this world: that they who see not may see, and they who see may become blind. And some of the Pharisees, who were with Him, heard, and they said unto Him: Are we also blind? Jesus said to them: If you were blind, you should not have sin; but now you say: We see. Your sin remaineth.”

4. THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE HIRELING. THE HISTORY OF THE KING'S SON IN SEARCH OF THE STRAY SHEEP

“Amen, amen, I say to you: he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he hath let out his own sheep, he goeth before them: and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice, but a stranger they follow not, but fly from him: because they know not the voice of strangers. This proverb Jesus spoke to them. But they understood not what He spoke to them. Jesus therefore said to them again: Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All others as many as have come, are thieves and robbers: and the sheep heard them not. I am the door. By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pastures. The thief cometh not, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.

But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth: and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep. And the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know Me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down My life for My sheep. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Therefore doth the Father love Me: because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father. A dissension rose again among the Jews for these words. And many of them said: He hath a devil, and is mad: why hear you Him? Others said: These are not the words of one that hath a devil: can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

More than 200 years ago, a devout spiritual writer composed a simple yet affecting allegory in elucidation of the above parable of the Good Shepherd. Although its language is plain and its style lacking in elegance, yet the subject itself is sublime. This quaint though charming story, which has edified and instructed our fathers, can not fail to edify and instruct us, if, like them, we read it with childlike simplicity and earnestness.

"One day, something more than 1500 years ago, a devout pilgrim was wending his weary way toward Jerusalem, whither he was hastening in order to fulfill in Solomon's temple a vow which he had made many years previously; to offer a long promised sacrifice. As he was making his way through a dense forest, just within the confines of the Holy Land, he heard a distant voice, evidently of a young person, calling repeatedly and in a plaintive tone: 'Lambkin, little lambkin, come to me!' The pilgrim listened to the youthful voice, whose tones were so exceedingly tender and sweet that he surely thought it must be the voice of an angel. Hearing the sound coming toward him, he stood still, and at last discovered a beautiful boy emerging from the thicket, a shepherd's crook in one hand, a pouch at his side, and with bare feet, and uncovered head. As the blooming youth stood still for a moment, the pilgrim became fully convinced that so fair a form must belong to heaven. His bright blue eyes,

his clustering golden hair, his ruby lips, his glowing cheeks, his graceful form, were all too lovely to belong to earth. In a word, his beauty was so fascinating that the heart must be a stony one indeed which would not love him. And yet the boy was in deep affliction and shed tears profusely.

“The good pilgrim, very much astonished, both at the youth’s beauty and his very deep distress, said to him: ‘My child, how comes it that you are here all alone in the wilderness? why do you weep so bitterly?’ The boy replied through his tears: ‘Ah, I have reason to weep, and be very unhappy, for I can not find what I am eagerly looking for.’ ‘And what are you in search of, pray?’ inquired the wondering pilgrim. ‘My Father,’ rejoined the youth, ‘owns a hundred sheep. Ninety-nine of them are well cared for at home, but the hundredth, which is our favorite, and indeed the fairest of the flock, has wandered away from home and got lost in these dismal woods. I am now in search of him, and am very tired, for I have been searching for many years. Not being able to find him, I am very sad, and indeed have nearly wept my eyes away in fatigue and disappointment.’ Then the pilgrim asked: ‘And who are you, my child, and what is your Father’s name?’ The youth replied: ‘My Father is a great Lord and King, with thousands, aye, tens of thousands of dependents; indeed, of his kingdom there is no end.’ Then the good pilgrim, very much puzzled, rejoined: ‘But if your Father is so grand and rich a King, how can he or you be so very solicitous about one paltry sheep?’ ‘True,’ replied the youth, ‘the loss of the sheep ought to be a very unimportant loss, but oh, my Father loved this one so dearly, that its long absence rends his very heart! He can not and will not forget it. Therefore he ordered me to go in search of it, commanding sternly that I must not return to his presence till I have found it and shall bring it back safe and sound.’

“The good pilgrim, wondering more and more at this strange story, ventured to ask again: ‘And had your Father no one else to send out on this long and exhausting search, but a young and delicate lad like you?’ ‘Yes, my Father has servants enough at his command, but he chose me, his only son, to go in search of the lost sheep, in order to show how dearly he loves the wayward wanderer from his flock.’ Again the pilgrim suggested: ‘And why did not your Father at least give you a servant to help you to find this stray sheep?’ ‘I did not wish to have any assistant, lest perhaps the poor

frightened creature might be afraid to come; to me alone he would not fear to come. For I thought: When the sheep shall perceive that I am alone, that I, the only son of my Father, tender and delicate as I am, have come out alone, without attendants and in torn garb, to wander with bleeding feet and aching heart over hill and dale, through the storm and in the scorching heat, in order to bring him home, he will be moved to pity and will let me save him.'

"The pilgrim inquired further: 'My child, how long have you been on this very weary search for your long-lost sheep?' His tears started afresh, as the comely youth mournfully answered: 'Alas! my Father sent me out when I was but a mere child, just able to walk; and, sadder yet, he has not given me even a piece of bread for my journey, nor offered me a place to rest my aching head. I am compelled, therefore, to take care of myself and seek a scanty subsistence among the kind and charitable. Never, since I left my Father's house, have I had more than barely sufficient to support life, although I have to travel early and late, and to pass many a cold and dreary night with the hard ground for my bed and the canopy of heaven for my shelter.'

"On the pilgrim's further inquiry, whether, during all this long lapse of time, he had not discovered any trace of his lost sheep, the youth replied: 'I think I have often seen him in the distance, but I could never get near him. For, as soon as the poor deluded creature would see me, he would not wait, but spring away from me and soon get out of my sight and hearing. This want of confidence on his part affects me so painfully that my very heart seems to be torn and crushed with disappointment; for I see plainly that my lost sheep does not care about me, and drags me on in this long and fruitless search, out of sheer malice. And yet, I will not give him up, nor cease from my pursuit till the deluded creature shall enter into himself and turn away from his evil wanderings.'

"The pilgrim being now puzzled beyond measure, said: 'My child, how can you be so deeply interested in this one stray sheep as to impose upon yourself this extraordinary amount of fatigue, anxiety, and exposure? The creature does not deserve to have one half-day wasted upon him.' The young man replied: 'I have nothing to gain by the recovery of this sheep, for he is, in one sense, really undeserving of all my painful efforts. But my reason for persisting in his recovery

is this: I have the greatest compassion for him and am filled with fear lest he should perish; for he is now lost, and will be forever lost and past recovery, if I do not find him soon. And, as I understand better than he does what it is to be forever lost, I will not desist from my pursuit till I shall have found him and brought him home, even if I have to lose my life in the effort.'

"The good pilgrim again inquired: 'And if this wayward creature should at last fall into your hands, would you not punish him severely for all the trouble he has caused you?' 'Punish him!' replied the youth, 'on the contrary, I would run toward him with open arms; I would throw myself upon his neck; I would embrace him affectionately; I would lay him on my shoulders; I would bring him back to my Father, exclaiming to our whole household: Rejoice, and make merry with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost!'

"The wondering pilgrim could not but admire the tender and disinterested affection of this young stranger, and replied, with tears starting from his eyes: 'O you dear and amiable child! How unbounded your love is for this wandering sheep of your Father's flock! If a dog had searched for his master as long and as faithfully as you have pursued this erring sheep, his master should love him, even if he had a heart as hard as iron. How much more is this sheep bound to love you, who have been so long in search of him!' 'Ah, indeed,' rejoined the youth, with great vehemence, 'I love that wandering sheep so dearly, that if I saw him amid a herd of furious wolves, I would rush into their midst and rescue him. Ay, if I had a hundred lives, I would give them all up to rescue my sheep and save him from never-ending perdition.' Saying these words, he began to weep so piteously that the kind-hearted pilgrim could not restrain his own tears, and with much compassion for the strange youth, bade him adieu and resumed his journey toward Jerusalem.

"The youth now plunged again into the depths of the forest, hastening as best he could from one point to another, still weeping piteously, moaning, and sighing, and crying out: 'Lambkin, my own long-lost sheep, come to me!' But the wandering creature was nowhere to be found. Then he left the woods, roamed over the open fields, climbed to the tops of the highest mountains, and with anxious eyes looked over the surrounding country, from one point to another, continuing to call out with plaintive, winning voice and amid blinding

tears: 'Lambkin, poor wandering, silly creature, come to me!' But yet the lost sheep was nowhere in view. Finally, the anxious youth, though troubled and wayworn, directed his weary steps toward the cities and towns, through village and hamlet, into farmyards and sheepfolds, inquiring of citizens and rustics: 'Have you not seen my long-lost sheep; have you not heard his bleating voice?' But, alas, God help the troubled youth! no one seemed to care about him or his lost sheep.

"And thus the persevering boy continued in untiring pursuit of his lost sheep, till he became a man, and was now entering upon the thirty-fourth year of his age, when, at last, one day he discovered the object of his love surrounded by a pack of ravening wolves. There was no other means of rescuing his favorite from imminent danger, but to rush in himself amid the wolves and snatch him away by main force. In his struggle with the wolves, the youthful shepherd was torn so dreadfully that his fair and graceful form was all one wound from head to foot. The furious and disappointed animals were not satisfied with this bloody work, but charged the bleeding, innocent shepherd with wanting to steal his own sheep, and so influenced the iniquitous judge and court that the gentle shepherd was condemned to die upon a cross.

"Just as the executioners were in the act of carrying out this unjust sentence, it happened that our pilgrim was again on his way to Jerusalem. Passing near Mount Calvary and seeing a great number of people gathered together and very much excited, the venerable pilgrim pushed his way with some difficulty through the crowd, in order to see what was going on. On reaching the summit of the hill, he was horrified to behold his old acquaintance, the youthful shepherd whom he had met in the woods years ago, now hanging nailed to a rough cross, and just alive. The once fair and beautiful form was so disfigured as to be hardly recognizable. The sorrowing pilgrim, drawing nearer, inquired in sad accents: 'Alas! are you not the same comely shepherd-boy whom I met many years ago in search of a lost sheep?' And the crucified sufferer replied: 'Alas! I am the same.' 'Then,' said the astonished pilgrim, 'how did you come to such a dreadful end? who has thus torn and disfigured your beautiful body?' The dying shepherd answered: 'It was my own stray sheep that brought me to this.' 'Impossible!' exclaimed the indignant pilgrim, 'for these are the marks and wounds not of a sheep, but of wolves, dogs, and lions.' The shepherd again

replied: 'Indeed they are the wounds inflicted upon me by my own wayward sheep.' The pilgrim inquired with astonishment: 'How can this be possible? No sheep will bite his shepherd, nor any man; for they are naturally mild and gentle.'

" 'And yet,' persisted the suffering and dying shepherd, 'my own lost sheep tore me more cruelly than any lion could lacerate me. When, after a weary search of three-and-thirty years, I found him at last amid ravening wolves, and in my delight, was about to rush into the very teeth of these ferocious animals, in order to save my favorite creature; he preferred his enemies to me, chose to remain in their company, and even set the wolves upon me. Aye, and he himself ran at me, threw me on the ground, trampled me under his feet, lacerated me with his teeth, and joined the wolves in such a violent attack upon me that no member of my body escaped unhurt. I bore all this ill-treatment without a word of reproach. Although my Father would have sent twelve legions of soldiers to my assistance, I would not accept them, always hoping that my lost sheep would still relent, especially when he saw how patiently I suffered for his sake.'

" 'But, alas! the headstrong animal, instead of relenting, hounded on all the other wild animals, till, at last, they nailed me to this cross to die; and here I hang in unspeakable agony of soul and body. And yet I continue to cry out through every wound in my body: Ah, thou deluded creature, erring sheep of my Father, come to me. I will forgive thee all the pain thou hast caused me; I will not give thee even an angry look, but will act toward thee as if thou hadst done me no wrong. Alas! poor creature, I can not die in peace till thou shalt come back to me. I love thee so tenderly that I would willingly hang in agony upon this cross for a whole year, rather than die without seeing thee return to our Father. And if I must die without thee, then I shall die in bitterness of heart. I conjure thee once more, for thy salvation's sake, leave the company of the wolves, and return to me, thy faithful, loving shepherd.'

" 'And in this piteous strain, the dying shepherd continued to talk till the breath left his body. And when, after all, the lost sheep had not come back, the expiring shepherd cried out with such a heartrending exclamation of disappointment, that the heavens and the earth trembled. Then the good shepherd, bowing down his head, yielded up his spirit in deep anguish.'"

Such is the story of the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. From this simple allegory we may see more clearly how eagerly Christ desired to save the lost sheep of Israel.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE TEN LEPERS. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. THE PERSEVERING PRAYER OF THE WIDOW. THE HUMBLE PRAYER OF THE PUBLICAN. THE FEAST OF THE DEDICATION AT JERUSALEM

Luke xvii. 11-18; John x. 22-42

1. JESUS CURES THE TEN LEPERS

“AND it came to pass as Jesus was going to Jerusalem, He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain town there met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voices, saying: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Whom when He saw He said: Go, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God. And he fell on his face before the feet of Jesus, giving thanks: and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said: Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger. And He said to him: Arise, go thy way: for thy faith hath made thee whole.”

2. HE ALLUDES TO HIS COMING TO JUDGE US

“And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said: The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say: Behold here, or behold there. For lo, the kingdom of God is within you. And He said to His disciples: The days will come when you shall desire to see one day of the Son of man, and you shall not see it. And they will say to you: See here, and see there. Go ye not after, nor follow them; for

as the lightning that lighteneth from under heaven, shineth unto the parts that are under heaven, so shall the Son of man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation.”

By this very repudiation and crucifixion of the Messias, Israel had filled the measure of its iniquity, and become ripe for those terrors of God’s judgment which were soon to fall upon the blood-stained heads of a deicide nation, in the destruction of Jerusalem. This first judgment is a figure of the second or last general judgment. For whilst the Saviour speaks of one, He points plainly to the other. Both will be preceded by terrible signs and warnings, and yet men will be so wilfully blind that they will be surprised and overtaken in their sins.

“And as it came to pass, in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat and drink, they married wives and were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they did eat and drink; they bought and sold; they planted and built; and in the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed. In that hour he that shall be on the house-top, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and he that shall be in the field, in like manner let him not return back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose it, shall preserve it. I say to you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed: the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together: the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two men shall be in the field: the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. They answering, say to Him: Where, Lord? Who said to them: Wheresoever the body shall be, thither will the eagles also be gathered together.”

Gladly would the Jews have known when and where these threatened judgments would take place. The reply of Jesus is not indeed as clear and definite as the Jews would have wished, but still it is precise enough and very significant. The body is Jerusalem, or rather its inhabitants, who, in repudiating the Messias, have committed suicide. Its use in the history of man is no longer needed, and it becomes a mere

carcass around which the Roman eagles, under the command of Titus, will gather. So the world on the last day will resemble a corpse upon which Christ and His angels will sit in solemn inquest.

3. PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE. EFFICACY OF PRAYER

“And Jesus spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying: There was a certain judge in a certain city, who feared not God, nor regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city, and she came to him, saying: Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a long time. But afterward he said within himself: Although I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this woman is troublesome to me, I will avenge her, lest continually coming she at last weary me. And the Lord said: Hear what the unjust judge saith. And will not God revenge His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He have patience in their regard? I say to you that He will quickly revenge them. But yet the Son of man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?”

4. PRAYER OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN. HUMBLE PRAYER

“And to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others, He spoke also this parable: Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican: I fast twice in a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven: but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you this man went down into his house justified rather than the other, because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.”

5. JESUS ASSERTS HIS ONENESS WITH THE FATHER. THE JEWS ATTEMPT TO STONE HIM

“And it was the feast of the Dedication of the temple at Jerusalem; and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the



Martin Feuerstein

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temple in Solomon's porch. The Jews therefore came round about Him, and said to Him: How long dost Thou hold our souls in suspense? if Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them: I speak to you, and you believe not: the works that I do in the name of My Father, they give testimony of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give them life everlasting: and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand. That which My Father hath given Me, is greater than all: and no man can snatch them out of the hand of My Father. I and the Father are one. The Jews then took up stones, to stone Him. Jesus answered them: Many good works I have showed you from My Father, for which of those works do you stone Me? The Jews answered Him: For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy: and because that Thou being a man, makest Thyself God. Jesus answered them: Is it not written in your law: I said, you are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken—and the Scripture can not be broken—do you say of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though you will not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father. They sought therefore to take Him: and He escaped out of their hands. And He went again beyond the Jordan into that place where John was baptizing first: and there He abode. And many resorted to Him, and they said: John indeed did no sign. But all things whatsoever John said of this man were true. And many believed in Him."

Some try to stone Jesus, others worship Him, and both for the same reason—because He had proved Himself in the clearest possible manner to be the Son of God. The old prophecy is fulfilled, for one and the same Christ came to be the resurrection and the fall of many. The Pharisees found no fault when they themselves, mortals as they were, were, in a figurative sense, called gods, on account of being made to His image and of their exalted destiny. But when He, whose acts and words form a long-continued manifestation of divine wisdom and power, declares Himself to be truly and literally God, they pronounce the assertion a crime deserving death.

CHAPTER XLIX

JESUS THE CHILDREN'S FRIEND. CHRISTIAN DUTY AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION. THE REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. THE PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matt. xix. 13-20; Mark x. 13-31; Luke xviii. 15-30

1. JESUS BLESSES CHILDREN

“THEN were little children presented to Jesus, that He should impose hands upon them and pray. Which when the disciples saw, they rebuked those that brought them. Whom, when Jesus saw, He was much displeased, and calling them together, said: Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Amen I say to you: Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child, shall not enter into it. And embracing them and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them.”

2. CHRISTIAN RIGHTEOUSNESS

“And when He was gone forth into the way, a certain ruler running up and kneeling before Him, asked Him: Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting? And Jesus said to him: Why asketh thou Me concerning good? why callest thou Me good? None is good,” that is, perfectly good, “but God alone. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. And the ruler saith to Him: Which? And Jesus said: Thou knowest the commandments: Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Do no fraud, Honor thy father and thy mother, and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But the young man answering, said to Him: Master, all these things I have observed from my youth, what yet is wanting to me?”

3. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AND VOLUNTARY POVERTY

“Which when Jesus had heard, looking on him, He loved him, and said to him: Yet one thing is wanting unto thee, if thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me. And when the young man heard this word, being struck sad at this saying, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions and was very rich.

“And Jesus seeing him become sorrowful, looking round about, saith to His disciples: Amen I say to you: How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God? And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus again answering, saith to them: Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And when the disciples had heard this, they wondered very much, saying: Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking on them, saith: With man it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

Jesus adverts again and again to the excellence of Christian poverty and to the perils of riches. It is only “with God,” that is, by a special grace, a grace absolutely essential to their condition, that those who are rich on earth can become rich in heaven. In what consists this special grace? In three things: first, that they consider their wealth, not as a personal excellence of which they can be proud, but as alms from the hand of God; secondly, they should employ their riches in supplying their wants with the utmost moderation; thirdly, they should act toward the poor and destitute with practical, useful, and untiring charity, and help to further the general welfare of mankind, by assisting education and sustaining God’s church.

4. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN’S REWARD

“Then Peter answering, said to Him: Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have? And Jesus said to them: Amen I say to you that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left home, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name’s sake and for the gospel, shall receive a hundredfold, now in this time; houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting. And many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

Many spiritual writers discover in this promise of Christ a prophetic view of the conventual life. The religious who leaves home, family, and worldly goods, will find this promise

verified within his convent walls, but not without persecution on the part of the world and the devil.

5. THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

“The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle, and he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just. And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour: and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the laborers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more: and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering, said to one of them: Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thy eye evil, because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first, last; for many are called, but few chosen.”

CHAPTER L

JESUS RAISES LAZARUS TO LIFE. THE JEWS RESOLVE TO PUT CHRIST TO DEATH

John xi. 1-56

1. LAZARUS IS SICK AND DIES

EVERY miracle wrought by our blessed Lord had a twofold object: to prove His divinity and power, and to convert unbelievers.

“Now there was a certain man sick named Lazarus, of Bethania, of the town of Mary and of Martha her sister.

(And Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair: whose brother Lazarus was sick.) His sister therefore sent to Him, saying: Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick. And Jesus hearing it, said to them: This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick he still remained in the same place two days. Then after that He said to His disciples: Let us go into Judea again. The disciples say to Him: Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again? Jesus answered: Are there not twelve hours of the day? If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world: but if he walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him.”

This light is Christ. If you walk in it, Christian reader, you need not fear any hostile power. The Almighty has appointed your day's work, and only when you have completed it, will the evening hour of rest arrive.

“These things He said, and after that He said to them: Lazarus our friend sleepeth: but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. His disciples therefore said: Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. But Jesus spoke of his death, and they thought that He spoke of the repose of sleep. Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly: Lazarus is dead: And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, that you may believe; but let us go to him. Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow-disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with Him,” that is, with Christ, in case the Jews should put Him to death.

2. JESUS VISITS MARTHA AND MARY

“Jesus therefore came: and found that he had been four days already in the grave. (Now Bethania was near Jerusalem about fifteen furlongs off.) And many of the Jews were come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Martha therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet Him: but Mary sat at home. Martha therefore said to Jesus: Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died: But now also I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee. Jesus saith to

her: Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to Him: I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me although he be dead, shall live: and every one that liveth, and believeth in Me, shall not die for ever. Believest thou this? She saith to Him: Yea, Lord, I have believed that Thou art Christ the Son of the living God, who art come into this world. And when she had said these things, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying: The Master is come and calleth for thee. She, as soon as she heard this, riseth quickly and cometh to Him: for Jesus was not yet come into the town: but He was still in that place where Martha had met Him. The Jews therefore who were with her in the house and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up speedily and went out, followed her, saying: She goeth to the grave to weep there. When Mary therefore was come to where Jesus was, seeing Him, she fell down at His feet, and saith to Him: Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Jesus therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her, weeping, groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself, and said: Where have you laid him? They say to Him: Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said: Behold how He loved him. But some of them said: Could not He, that opened the eyes of the man born blind, have caused that this man should not die?"

3. HE RESTORES LAZARUS TO LIFE

“Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself, cometh to the sepulchre; now it was a cave: and a stone was laid over it. Jesus saith: Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to Him: Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days. Jesus saith to her: Did not I say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God? They took therefore the stone away; and Jesus lifting up His eyes, said: Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me; and I knew that Thou hearest Me always, but because of the people who stand about have I said it: that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. When He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding-bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them: Loose him and let him

go. Many therefore of the Jews who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him.”

In no other of His numerous miracles has Jesus so clearly proved and triumphantly established His divine mission and His unlimited power over that unyielding and positive master of men, death, as in the restoration to life of Lazarus who had not only died, but having been four days in the grave, must have been on the verge of decomposition. This was indeed one of the Saviour's most glorious miracles, and an indubitable proof of the presence upon earth of the long-expected Redeemer. It proved Him really to be the resurrection and the life, the Messiah who had come to destroy the dominion of sin, the wages of death, and to seek and to save that which was lost. He performed this wonder only a short time before His own death, in order to strengthen the faith of His apostles and to convert the wavering. The chief-priests, however, were completely and incurably blinded by this dazzling miracle, for the high council, at the suggestion of the high-priest Caiphas, resolved soon after to put Jesus to death.

4. THE JEWS ATTEMPT TO KILL JESUS. HE ESCAPES

“But some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done. The chief-priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said: What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him: and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation. But one of them named Caiphas, being the high-priest that year, said to them: You know nothing, neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spoke not of himself: but being the high-priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but to gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed. From that day therefore they devised to put Him to death. Wherefore Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews, but He went into a country near the desert, unto a city that is called Ephrem, and there He abode with His disciples. And the Pasch of the Jews was at hand: and many from the country went up to Jerusalem before the Pasch, to purify themselves. They sought therefore for Jesus: and they discoursed one with another, standing in the temple: What think you,

that He is not come to the festival day? And the chief-priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where He was, he should tell, that they might apprehend Him."

CHAPTER LI

CHRIST FORETELLS HIS PASSION AND DEATH. THE UNREASONABLE DEMAND OF THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE

Matt. xx. 17-28; Mark x. 32-46; Luke xviii. 31-34

"AND they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them, and they were astonished, and following were afraid. And taking again the twelve disciples apart, He began to tell them the things that should befall Him, saying: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For He shall be betrayed to the chief-priests and to the scribes and ancients, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock Him and spit on Him and scourge Him. And after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again.

"And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said."

"Then came to Jesus the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons James and John, adoring and asking something of Jesus, saying: Master, we desire that whatsoever we shall ask, Thou wouldst do it for us? But He said to them: What would you I should do for you? She saith to Him: Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left in Thy kingdom. And Jesus answering, said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized? But they said to Him: We can. And Jesus saith to them: You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of; and with the baptism wherewith I am baptized, you shall be baptized. But to sit on My right hand or on My left, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by My Father.

“And the ten hearing it, began to be much displeased at James and John. But Jesus calling them, saith to them: You know that they who seem to rule over the Gentiles, lord it over them: and their princes have power over them. But it is not so among you, but whosoever will be greater, shall be your minister: and whosoever will be first among you, shall be the servant of all. For the Son of man also is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many. And they come to Jericho.”

CHAPTER LII

THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN NEAR JERICHO. ZACCHEUS THE PUBLICAN. THE PAR- ABLE OF THE TEN TALENTS

Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35; xix. 18

1. CHRIST CURES A BLIND MAN NEAR JERICHO

“Now it came to pass, when He drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the way side begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing commanded him to be brought unto Him. And when he was come near, he asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people when they saw it, gave praise to God.”

2. ZACCHEUS THE PUBLICAN

“And entering in, He walked through Jericho. And behold there was a man named Zaccheus, who was the chief of the publicans; and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And running before, he climbed up into a sycamore tree that he might see Him: for He was to pass that way.

And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up, He saw him, and said to him: Zaccheus, make haste and come down: for this day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him with joy. And when all saw it, they murmured, saying that He was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. But Zaccheus standing, said to the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have wronged any man of any thing, I restore him fourfold. Jesus said to him: This day is salvation come to this house: because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

3. THE PARABLES OF THE TEN SERVANTS

"As they were hearing these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem: and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately be manifested. He said therefore: A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And calling his ten servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them: Trade till I come. But his citizens hated him: and they sent an embassy after him, saying: We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass that he returned, having received the kingdom: and he commanded his servants to be called, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. And the first came, saying: Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said to him: Well done, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a little, thou shalt have power over ten cities. And the second came, saying: Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said to him: Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying: Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and thou reapest that which thou didst not sow. He saith to him: Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant; thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow: and why then didst thou not give my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have exacted it with usury? And he said to them that stood by: Take the pound away from him, and give it to him that hath the ten pounds. And they said to him: Lord, he hath ten pounds. But I say to you, that to every one that

hath shall be given and he shall abound: and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him. But as for those my enemies who would not have me reign over them, bring them hither: and kill them before me. And having said these things, he went before going up to Jerusalem."

Who is this nobleman of the parable? None other than Jesus Christ Himself, who, after His death and resurrection, ascended into heaven, that distant land, to take possession of His throne of glory at the right hand of His Father, whence He will return on the last day. The servants are His apostles and disciples, who are to use to the best advantage, and with the greatest possible profit, the talents of grace and of truth in saving their own and their fellow-creatures' souls. The rebellious citizens are all wicked men who refuse to believe and obey Christ, but more especially the Jews. For did not the Jews, when Pilate presented Jesus to them as their king of the family of David, cry out: "We have no king but Cæsar! Away with this man! We will not have Him to rule over us! Crucify Him!" By adopting this course of action, they rendered themselves amenable to the terrible judgment of the Conqueror. For, as the nobleman in the parable returned, so too will Christ come again and demand an account from the good, bad, slothful, and rebellious. This examination takes place at every individual's death, but it will be held solemnly before the assembled world on the last day. The good will receive rich rewards, but from the slothful will be taken the graces once bestowed upon them. For he who squanders divine grace loses it completely and falls into stubborn blindness, whilst he who co-operates faithfully receives grace upon grace in more bountiful and overflowing measure.

4. CHRIST, ON LEAVING JERUSALEM, CURES TWO BLIND MEN

"And as Jesus went out of Jericho with His disciples and a very great multitude, Bar-timeus, the blind man, the son of Timeus, sat by the way side begging.¹ Who, when he had heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, began to cry out, and to say: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, that he might hold his peace. But he cried a great deal the more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing still, commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying to him: Be of better comfort: arise,

¹St. Matthew says there were two blind men.

He calleth thee. Who casting off his garment, leaped up, and came to Him. And Jesus answering, said to him: What wilt thou that I should do to thee? And the blind man said to Him: Rabboni, that I may see. And Jesus saith to him: Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him in the way."

To see and to follow Christ! we must do both in our spiritual life. It is certainly a great misfortune to be blind in spirit; that is, not to know the saving truths at all, like the heathens, or only imperfectly, and disfigured and clouded by error, as was the case with most of the Jews of that time. But far more deplorable than the spiritual blindness of the Jews and pagans, is the unhappy lot of that Christian who, by God's grace, having been made to see, that is, after having been well instructed in all the truths of his religion, still, out of sloth and self-indulgence, does not follow Christ—does not live up to his faith. While his understanding is enlightened by the rays of holy knowledge, his heart is darkened by a night of sin. And this dismal night of sin in the heart gradually and slowly, but surely, sends its dark death-shadows into the sinner's understanding. His religious convictions grow faint and dim, darkness ensues, and finally, the last faint rays of Christian truth disappear; as charity dies, hope and faith take flight.

CHAPTER LIII

JESUS IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE LEPER. MARY MAGDALEN ANOINTS HIS FEET

Matt. xxvi. 6-13; Mark xiv. 3-9; John xii. 1-11

"JESUS therefore, six days before the pasch, came to Bethania, where Lazarus had been dead whom Jesus raised to life. And they made Him a supper there in the house of Simon the leper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that were at table with Him.

"And when He was at meat there came to Him a woman, Mary, having an alabaster box, with a pound of precious ointment of right spikenard: and breaking the alabaster box, she poured it out upon His head as He was at table. And she anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

“And the disciples seeing it, had indignation within themselves, saying,” prompted by Judas: “Why was this waste of the ointment made? And they murmured against her. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray Him, said: Why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence and given to the poor? Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief; and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein.”

“Wherefore this waste?” Malicious question of the traitor! It is a waste for a repentant, faithful, self-sacrificing soul to give honor to the Son of the living God, to the King of glory, to the Good Shepherd about to lay down His life for His flock! Like a mere mercenary he calculates the expense, and lest men should discover his true feelings, he hypocritically pretends to deplore the loss to the poor.

“And Jesus knowing it, said to them: Why do you trouble this woman? Let her alone, for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For the poor you have always with you, and whosoever you will, you may do them good; but Me you have not always. What she had, she hath done, for she, in pouring this ointment upon My body, is come beforehand to anoint My body for the burial. Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her.

“A great multitude therefore of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief-priests thought to kill Lazarus also, because many of the Jews by reason of him went away and believed in Jesus.”

PART V

The Passion Week of Our Lord Jesus Christ

CHAPTER I

CREATION WEEK. PASSION WEEK. HOLY WEEK. THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST IN GEN- ERAL. THE EVENTS OF EACH DAY DUR- ING THE WEEK OF HIS SUFFERING

1. CREATION WEEK AND PASSION WEEK

A LONG time had elapsed since Creation Week, that week of divine omnipotence, during which the Most High had called into existence the world with all its beauty, and enthroned man upon it as the king of all creation. Alas! Adam, by sinning, had, as far as in him lay, laid waste and undone God's work of Creation Week, and his descendants had followed the unhappy example of their forefather. But God at last was moved to pity, and then dawned the first day of the week of grace, the suffering week of Christ, during which, by the death of the God-man, creation was renewed, and man restored to his original dignity and forfeited claims. As man had been created on the sixth day of Creation Week, so on the sixth day of Atonement Week was He created anew in Christ, and born again into eternal life.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLY WEEK

The solemn commemoration of this sacred and mysterious week takes place every year at the close of Lent, during the days composing our Holy Week. The Greeks and Latins anciently called it the Great Week, sometimes the Painful Week or the Week of Austerities, also the Week of Sorrows, and the Days of the Cross or of Sufferings. In England and Ireland, before the so-called Reformation, it was generally known as Passion Week, although now that name is usually given to the week which follows Passion Sunday.

"We call it the Great Week," says St. Chrysostom, "not

because it consists of a greater number of days, nor that the days are longer, but on account of the great things which God hath wrought in it. For on these days was the tyranny of the devil overthrown, death disarmed, sin and its curse taken away, heaven opened and made accessible, and men made fellows with angels."

The exterior solemnity with which the Church has ever observed this holy time, puts Christians in mind of their obligation of redoubling their fervor in all the holy exercises of Lent, and in all works of piety and religion. No man can deserve to bear the name of a Christian who is so slothful as to fail in this duty. By closing well the holy time of Lent, we shall reap abundant fruits of our penance, and of the sacred mysteries which we here commemorate. All who call themselves children of the Church strive to outdo themselves and each other on this great solemnity, as St. Bernard observes. The sentence which was passed in the old law against those who should neglect to sanctify the yearly great fast of the expiation, will be executed in a much more dreadful manner upon those pretended Christians who let pass the commemoration of these most tender and adorable mysteries, without being touched with a due sense of compunction, gratitude, love, and piety.

All the exercises of Lent must be now continued with redoubled fervor, to which we must excite ourselves by the most devout meditation on the Cross and Passion of our divine Redeemer. This must be the great and only object of our thoughts and devout entertainments at this time. The divine Jesus suffering, Jesus nailed to a cross, Jesus dying for our sins, must always be present to our minds; our hearts must be continually occupied on Him. In His presence and at the foot of His cross, we must perform all our religious and penitential exercises, by which we study to die to ourselves, that, dying with Him, we may rise with Him conformed in our interior to His holy image.

3. CATHOLIC OBSERVANCE OF HOLY WEEK

From the earliest days of antiquity during Holy Week, all strains of joyful chants and all sounds of musical instruments were hushed in public worship. All ornaments, expressions of gladness, were removed from the churches, and even the outer world maintained a solemn stillness. The churches were more frequently and numerous attended. All Christian

antiquity solemnized this Holy Week in pious mourning, in works of penance and of charity, as all true and faithful Christians do, even in our own degenerate day.

One of the most cherished devotions peculiar to this week is the *Tenebræ*, which is chanted solemnly on the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The service consists of those psalms which have a bearing on the great mystery of the atonement or a reference to the sufferings and death of our divine Saviour Jesus Christ, together with selections from the fathers of the Church and from Scripture, especially from the Lamentations of Jeremias the prophet. During the recitation of this office, we see a very peculiar and unusual object in the sanctuary, namely, a triangular candlestick having fifteen burning tapers of wax, all of a dark yellow color, save the one on the point of the triangle, which is of pure white wax. One of these candles is extinguished at the end of each psalm, the only one left burning being the white taper standing on the apex of the triangle. During the chanting of the *Benedictus*, this burning candle is removed, and kept concealed behind the altar, and at the close of the canticle it is brought forth again still lighted, and is replaced before the altar. The gradual extinction of the fourteen candles symbolizes the treason of Judas, the denial of Peter, and the flight of the other apostles on the arrest of their divine Master. The darkness that ensues toward the end of the ceremony, and especially while the only burning taper is concealed from sight, reminds us of the physical darkness that came upon the earth at the hour of Christ's death, as well as the spiritual gloom in which the Jewish people were enveloped. The white wax candle represents Christ, who stood firm when all His disciples had fled, and who, when His enemies fondly hoped that they had put Him out of the way forever, came forth in renewed life and light before the whole world.

At the close of the *Tenebræ*, a weird and solemn noise is made by means of a wooden clapper, to represent the wild and wrangling shouts of the populace, the clamor of the soldiers, and the mockeries which the Jews spewed out against the crucified Saviour. These same dismal and dreary sounds take the place of the cheerful tinkling of the bells, during all the religious services from the *Gloria* on Holy Thursday to the *Gloria* on Holy Saturday. The silent bells remind us of the apostles, who were afraid to speak during the time of Jesus' suffering, but who, after His triumphant resurrection

and ascension into heaven, filled the whole world with the stirring tones of their powerful eloquence. The voiceless organ reminds us of the drowsy disciples who fell asleep in the garden of Olives.

Before entering on the consideration of the separate sublime mysteries of Holy Week in particular, we have to dwell on five points: first, the whole history of Christ's Passion in general; secondly, the deep anguish that our blessed Saviour must have felt in these sufferings; thirdly, the great utility of frequent meditation on the history of the Passion; fourthly, the devotion of the Way of the Cross; and fifthly, the chronological order of the various events on the different days of Holy Week.

4. THE EXTENT IN GENERAL OF OUR LORD'S SUFFERINGS

We begin with the extent of Christ's sufferings in general. Here we must remember, that as Christ had come to atone for men of all conditions, and to offer satisfaction for all and every species of sin, He wished to suffer all and every kind of ignominy at the hands of people of every kind, condition, and even sex.

Hence He suffered at the hands of Jews and of Gentiles, of men and women—for it was a woman that led to the defection of St. Peter—of grown people and of children, of priests and of laity, of friends—who all deserted Him—and of enemies, of princes and of common people, of unbelievers, and even of believers—for these last left Him and remained in cowardly concealment during the hours of His humiliation.

Moreover, as man had abused and prostituted to the service of sin, all the goods given him by the Lord his God, our dear Redeemer wished to suffer in all and every good. His body became one dreadful wound from head to foot, His soul was sorrowful even unto death, His only substance—His clothing—was wrested from Him, the bonds of friendship were rent asunder, His honor and His good name were tarnished, and at last His very life was taken.

Moreover, as man had employed all his members and senses of the body as instruments of sin, our divine Saviour chose to suffer pain in all His members and in every sense. His head was pierced with the sharp thorns of His crown of mockery, His fair sweet face was spit upon and struck, His hands and feet were lacerated with nails, His side was torn open with a lance, and His whole body was flayed with the lashes of the

scourge. He wished, too, to suffer in each one of His five senses: in feeling, by the cruel scourging, blows, and other woundings; in taste, by His parching thirst and the draught of vinegar and gall; in smell, by the offensive odors of Golgatha; in hearing, by the false accusations and cruel words of mockery; in sight, by the painful twofold spectacle of the furious mob and of the deeply afflicted friends and relatives who stood under His cross.

Finally, we ought to study and consider carefully the length of time that our blessed Lord had to bear these dreadful afflictions. For many persons deceive themselves on this point, and some there are who presume to compare their own petty grievances with the fearful sufferings of the Redeemer, and even venture to say: "Indeed, Christ did suffer beyond all expression, both in soul and body and in every one of His senses and faculties; but then His sufferings lasted only a few hours, whilst My misery and afflictions have endured for years." A gross delusion! for the sufferings of Christ affected every hour, every moment of His life upon earth. From the moment of His conception, He foresaw by virtue of His divine omniscience or foreknowledge, every lash of the scourges, every thorn in His crown, every blow of the enemy's hand, all the mockeries, the cross itself, and even the agony of death, all plainly pictured before His vision. On the other hand, by virtue of His true and real humanity, He felt from that same moment of His conception, on through every hour of His life, all His future sufferings; and with such painful vividness that, as spiritual writers tell us, His whole life was one perpetual death-agony. Our Lord Himself asserts this dreadful truth, when He exclaims through the mouth of the Psalmist: "My sorrow is continually before Me. My life is wasted with grief and My years in sighs. I am poor and ready to die from My youth, and the fear of death is fallen upon Me." And when our Saviour testifies through the same royal Psalmist: "All the day long My enemies reproach Me: and they that praised Me did swear against Me." He means no other day than the day of His whole human life. Hence we may well infer, and with undoubted certainty believe, that our Lord suffered in His soul, by anticipation, during the three-and-thirty years of His life, the whole anguish of His passion and death. A victim destined to sacrifice, He foresaw from the first moment of His life the dread hour of sacrifice with all its accompanying tortures.

5. THE DEEP ANGUISH WHICH HE EXPERIENCED IN THESE SUFFERINGS

Four special causes may be given for the inexpressible anguish which our Saviour must have felt in His passion and death, namely, the supreme and excellent perfection of His person, the perfect sinlessness of His whole nature, the sympathy of His Virgin-Mother, and lastly, the ardent love of His soul toward sinners.

When any ordinary man—one who, from his youth up, has lived in poverty and obscurity—finds himself betrayed, disgraced, calumniated, and unjustly cast into prison, he feels the indignity very keenly. But as the difference between his present condition in jail and his former habits and circumstances of life is not so immeasurably great, his misfortune is not altogether insufferable. But when some mighty king or haughty emperor, whose whole life hitherto has resembled one triumphal march, and before whom the nations and the great ones in life have bowed down to the dust, when such a proud monarch is hurled from his throne and reduced to poverty, neglect, and imprisonment, we can hardly conceive the depths of his mental anguish. O dearest Jesus! what is the mightiest of earthly potentates compared to Thee? Thou art King of kings, the only begotten Son of God, worshipped from all eternity by the hosts of heaven. Who can conceive what Thy body and sacred person must have felt when Thou sawest Thyself abandoned and trodden under-foot like a very worm of the earth!

In consequence of sin, pain and misery became our lot. Through the long line of generation after generation, both our spiritual and bodily natures became, as it were, schooled to suffering, and our sensitiveness for pain became dulled and languid. Sin, by rendering human nature sluggish and torpid, as it were prepared it to bear pain and anguish with less acuteness of feeling. But oh, how different from ours was the divine and sinless personality of Jesus Christ! Dearest Redeemer, how Thy whole nature must have shrunk from contact with the dreadful consequences of sin, that is, from suffering of soul and body! How it must have recoiled from the unspeakable violence and abuse with which Thy enemies tortured Thy tender and virginal flesh! How it must have shuddered at the mental anguish into which both friend and enemy did plunge Thy heart and soul!

And alas! too, not only in His own person did our beloved

Lord and Saviour suffer, but also in the person of His dearly beloved Virgin-Mother Mary. The sword of grief which pierced the maternal heart in these hours of agony, had sunken its sharpest point deep into the heart of the Son. The fond and faithful mother sympathized with the sufferings of her Son, and this very sympathy of hers rendered the pains of her Son the more acute. Every sympathetic sigh that escaped from the lips of the sorrowing mother, as she stood beneath the cross, caused the tender heart of the crucified Son to throb with new and unspeakable thrills of agony, whilst every compassionate look of hers augmented the anguish of her expiring Son.

But what heightened and augmented beyond all conception the mental agony of our dying Redeemer, was the terrible vision that rose before His eyes of thousands, yea, millions, of sinners who would refuse, or at least fail, to profit by the atoning death of their Saviour; and who, notwithstanding His fearfully perfect sacrifice, would die unredeemed and fall victims to the never-ending chastisements of God's justice. Oh, the tender love and all-embracing mercy of our suffering Lord for sinners! For their sake He came down from heaven. In the tenderest and most winning terms, He called, invited, and exhorted them to their salvation. For them, too, He now hangs dying upon the cross; while, in His spiritual vision, He sees, by virtue of His divine foreknowledge, the countless sinners of all future ages who will prefer to know nothing of Him nor of His unbounded love. While in His very death-throes, He, in spirit, hears and sees them as they call out to Him: "Thou mayest die for us, but we will not obtain eternal life by Thy death. It is useless for Thee to stretch out Thy bleeding arms toward us; Thy great love does not move us, nor does Thy dying look of affection penetrate our souls." Here we discover the chief source of our dear Redeemer's bitterest anguish in the very struggles of death.

6. THE ADVANTAGE OF FREQUENT MEDITATION ON THE PASSION

And yourself! Are you perhaps to be counted in with these obdurate sinners? Alas! this is a dismal question. But the safest evidence, the most incontestable proof of your complete ability to confidently give a negative reply to this question, must consist in your having an ardent zeal and a devout yearning for the frequent study and consideration of the history of our blessed Lord and Saviour's sufferings and

death, and a sincere wish to apply them profitably to your soul.

“The cross,” says St. Augustine, “was not only the death-bed of Christ; it was His pulpit.” Come therefore and sit down, like a docile pupil of your great Master, at the foot of the cross. Raise your eyes to your dying Redeemer. Here you may learn the depths of human misery, and draw from such knowledge readiness and strength, even a willingness to suffer. Here you may see the riches of divine mercy, and thus become inflamed with sentiments of holy gratitude toward Him who loved you unreservedly. Here you will learn the value of suffering, and rejoice to suffer with Him who has suffered so much for you. Here you will discern the rigor of divine justice and the enormous malice of sin, which required so sanguinary an atonement from innocence himself. Here you will learn to tremble for your sins with a salutary fear and acquire a wholesome dread of heaven’s chastisements. Here you will discover the loving compassion of your Saviour, and be so overwhelmed at this discovery, that you will rush with laudable impetuosity into the arms of your crucified Jesus. Here will the just man be edified and confirmed in all goodness. Here will the sinner be moved to sorrow, and impelled to acts of repentance. Here will the troubled mind be comforted, the doubting mind be convinced, while sloth in God’s service will be changed into a spirited and lively zeal.

Do you now understand why our Christian forefathers were so careful to place the crucifix, that glorious memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, along the highways and in the public squares, on their churches, and even sometimes on their dwelling-houses? Do you now understand, too, how it is that the most learned men of past ages always declared that they learned more wisdom at the foot of the crucifix than in the closest study of the ablest authors? Do you understand how it is, that often in the simplest persons who have known no other school than that of the crucifix, you meet with a clearer perception and a more thorough appreciation of the profoundest and most important mysteries of religion, than you will find with one who has spent years in the schools?

7. HISTORY AND MEANING OF THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Do you now understand why our holy Church in very early times established “The Way of the Cross,” or the devotion

of the stations? why she recommended this devotion to her children and enriched it with such ample indulgences, that it soon became a cherished devotion among Catholic communities, and hardly a church or chapel could be found in which the fourteen stations of our Saviour's passion were not set up for the edification and spiritual improvement of the people?

In very early times, a desire grew up among the believers in Christ to visit and to venerate in sorrow and gratitude those memorable places in Morning-Land which the Redeemer had made sacred by His sufferings, had moistened with His blood, and sanctified by His cruel and ignominious death. As tradition informs us, the holy apostles, with the Mother of Sorrows, as well as the disciples and the first Christians generally, often went over the road leading from Pilate's house to Calvary, in order to keep fresh in their memories the sufferings of their beloved Lord and Master, and to keep alive and to nourish in their hearts sentiments of sympathy and of gratitude. On these pilgrimages, they would stop at those points which had been made memorable by the most prominent events of the passion; such as the meeting of Jesus with the weeping women, His repeated falls under the cross, and others. Here they would throw themselves on their knees and kiss the very earth with fervor and reverence.

After the discovery, by the devout Empress Helena, of the true cross on which our Saviour had died, these pilgrimages became very frequent. During a period of more than 500 years, immense crowds of pilgrims were in the habit of going from all parts of Christendom to Jerusalem. We can well understand how, by these pilgrimages, as well as by the pious pilgrims themselves, and also by all those who heard their accounts on their return from the Holy Land, love for our crucified Lord and gratitude for His precious sufferings and death must have been augmented, and the remembrance of the various circumstances of this holy tragedy been kept alive throughout all Christendom. Hence the Church granted abundant indulgences to these pilgrims; such, for example, as an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines for visiting the sacred spot where the Blessed Virgin met our Lord carrying His cross: a similar indulgence for a prayer said on the spot where Simon the Cyrenean was compelled to relieve the fainting Saviour of His cross; and again for the veneration of the place where Christ was despoiled of His garments;

while plenary indulgences were granted for a visit to the site of the crucifixion, to the site of the holy sepulcher, and other prominent places.

When, however, the Holy Land had fallen under the sway of the infidels, and pilgrimages to the holy places became difficult, dangerous, and finally impossible, certain pious men, especially the Franciscans, conceived the idea of substituting for these actual pilgrimages a certain devotion, by the practice of which these holy places could be visited in spirit, and the salutary fruits and advantages of a pilgrimage to a distant land could be obtained at home. They therefore selected fourteen incidents of the passion-history, had them represented in painting or sculpture, and set up these representations in churches and chapels, or sometimes on the side of a road leading up to some oratory situated on the summit of a hill. Before each one of these fourteen stations, the faithful people performed their devotions in meditation, compassion, and prayer, as if really standing or kneeling on the sacred spots on which the events depicted in the representation had taken place centuries before. The Popes extended to all those who made this Way of the Cross, stopping at each station to meditate on the passion and to pray, all those indulgences which were formerly granted to pilgrims visiting the Holy Land itself.

8. SUMMARY OF THE EVENTS OF HOLY WEEK

Before closing this chapter and proceeding to the consideration of the particular events of Holy Week, it may be useful to mention these events briefly and in general terms, and to state the different days on which they occurred.

On the morning of Palm Sunday,¹ Jesus having left Bethania, where He had passed the Sabbath, and together with Lazarus had dined in the house of Simon the leper, came to Bethphage, whence He proceeded to Jerusalem, amid hosannas and shouts of welcome from the multitude. Entering the city, He wept as He announced its coming destruction, and without delay went up to the temple, where He healed several lame and blind persons. Some Gentiles who had come in to the Passover celebration, expressed to Philip their desire to see

¹That is, on the tenth of April; for, according to the opinion of learned men, Christ died on the fifteenth of April. Of course, there may be some uncertainty about this date, and we must respect another well-founded opinion that He died on the twenty-fifth of March.

Jesus. Just then He was glorified in a very special manner in the temple by a miraculous voice from heaven, as had happened on the banks of the Jordan three years before, at the beginning of His public ministry. After having availed Himself of this extraordinary occurrence to endeavor to awaken sentiments of faith in the hearts of the Jews, He left the holy city toward evening and went with His twelve apostles to pass the night at Bethania.

On Monday morning He again returned with the twelve to Jerusalem, and on His way He cursed the barren fig-tree. Entering the temple, He drove out the money-changers, as He had done on the first Passover in His public life; and after spending the whole day teaching in the temple, again repaired toward evening to Bethania.

On their way back to Jerusalem on Tuesday morning, the disciples were astonished to find the fig-tree which Jesus had cursed the day before, now all withered and dead. The divine Master seized upon this incident to demonstrate to them the efficacy of prayer. The scribes asked Him for His authority, and He silenced them by inquiring if they knew whence John the Baptist derived his authority. He then condemned their unbelief by proposing the parables of the two sons sent by their father into the vineyard, of the vineyard and the ruthless tenants, of the supper and the guests who did not respond to the invitation. The scribes, who had become very angry, then tried to bring Him into trouble by asking whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. But Jesus put them to shame by His careful and prudent reply. He then discoursed with the Sadducees on the subject of the resurrection and on the life beyond the grave; and with the Pharisees concerning the greatest commandment of the law; and on the two natures in Christ, as Son of God and Son of David. Then followed the severe condemnation of the actions and omissions of the Pharisees, and another declaration of the destruction of Jerusalem. On His way out of the temple, Jesus saw the widow placing her mite in the contribution-box, and commended her good will and real generosity. He then foretold to His disciples the complete destruction of the temple.

Jesus then proceeded at once, with His apostles, to Mount Olivet, where, turning about toward the city and directing His gaze upon the temple and other buildings opposite, He described to His disciples the signs and forebodings of the destruction of the city, its coming distresses, tribulations, and

final overthrow. He also predicted the end of the world. As a warning to vigilance and to proper preparations for the dire event, He proposed the parables of the wise and of the improvident virgins, of the faithful and the unfaithful servants; all said with the view of preparing His followers to merit the comforting words of the eternal Judge, "Come ye blessed of My Father," and to escape the dreadful sentence intended for the wicked, "Depart from Me, ye cursed."

On Wednesday, Jesus announced to His disciples that He would now be crucified in a couple of days; and also, as tradition affirms, took occasion to reveal to His blessed Mother His impending sufferings and death. On this day, too, the Jews decided in solemn council to take Jesus, if possible, before the festival of the Passover; and Judas offered to deliver up his Master within the specified time, for thirty pieces of silver.

On the morning of Holy Thursday, Jesus gave orders to the holy apostles Peter and John to make the necessary preparations for the solemn celebration of the Pasch or last supper, which He observed that same evening by eating the paschal lamb with His apostles. After the supper, He washed the disciples' feet and instituted the Blessed Sacrament, and alluded to the treason of Judas, who then rose up and hurried away. Jesus then began His farewell discourse to His apostles, which He continued till they had reached Gethsemane, and finally concluded with His glorious intercessory prayer as high-priest.

In the garden of Olives, Jesus prayed and fell into an agony, in anticipation of the horrors of His death on the cross. Judas then appeared on the scene at the head of a large crowd, and betrayed his Master with a kiss, who was then taken prisoner by the servants of the high-priest, and although it was quite late, was led away, bound with cords, to Annas, and thence to his son-in-law, Caiphas, the high-priest. The crowd dispersed about midnight and Jesus was left in charge of rude soldiers in the outer court. Meanwhile Peter had cut off the servant's ear and been reproved by Jesus, had three times denied his Master, and again bewailed his weakness with many tears of sorrow and remorse.

Friday morning was ushered in with another meeting of the high-council, who adjudged our Lord as deserving death and sent Him to Pilate the governor, to have their sentence confirmed, and pronounced, and carried into execution. When

Judas saw the length to which the whole affair was coming, he was seized with remorse and despair and hanged himself.

Being brought before Pilate, Jesus was accused of being a disturber and seducer of the people, and was examined on these charges by the governor, who, in turn, sent Him to Herod. This officer, who happened to be in Jerusalem just then, only mocked and ridiculed the Saviour, who was once more dragged back to Pilate by the servants.

Pilate was inclined to set Jesus free, but the Jews insisted that Barabbas should be released, and that Jesus should be crucified. He was then scourged, crowned with thorns, and ridiculed and mocked by the soldiery; and in a most pitiable and suffering state was presented to the people by Pilate, who hoped to excite their sympathies and compassion. But these, urged and encouraged by the chief-priests, demanded His blood, whilst Pilate, alarmed at their threats, pronounced the sentence and handed his victim over to the soldiers for crucifixion. All these things were done before nine o'clock in the morning of Friday. Jesus was again mocked and ridiculed by the soldiers, abused in every form, and finally dragged out of the city, with His cross upon His shoulders, to the place of execution.

The journey to Calvary and the execution consumed the three remaining hours before midday, and it was about noon when the cross, with Jesus nailed upon it, was planted between two other crosses on which hung two malefactors. For three weary hours our blessed Lord hung in excruciating agony upon His cross, abandoned by His friends, reproached and ridiculed by the scribes and Jewish priests. Finally, about three in the afternoon, He bowed His head in death, and His soul went to limbo, where the souls of the just who died under the old dispensation were awaiting deliverance.

Toward evening, a soldier tore open the side of Jesus with a lance, and soon after Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, with some other friends of Jesus, came, took the body from the cross, and buried it.

During the Saturday the body of Jesus lay lifeless in the sepulcher. The chief-priests and the Pharisees induced Pilate to place a guard over the tomb, and it was so done. Such is a brief and cursory statement of the events of Redemption Week.

CHAPTER II

CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

(PALM SUNDAY)

Matt. xxi. 1-17; Mark xi. 1-11; Luke xix. 29-44; John xii. 12-50

ALL the sublime doctrines of Jesus Christ, His moral code, His acts and omissions, were far above the dull comprehension and notions of mere worldings. The kingdom that He was to establish was not of this world, nor was it to be governed by the principles of this world. The humblest and meekest individual was to be the first and the highest in this kingdom; for it was built upon the corner-stones of humility and meekness, as our divine Lord Himself states when He says: "Learn of Me, for I am *meek* and *humble* of heart." Our divine Master wished to give evidence on the first day of the solemn week of Redemption, of this extraordinary and unworldly character of His kingdom, and therefore He rode as a king, but a meek and humble one, on the back of an ass's foal into the city of Jerusalem. But desiring at the same time to give to His disciples a foretaste of the rewards and future triumph of Christian humility, He so influenced the hearts of the friendly crowd that, as He rode in through the gates, they offered Him unusual homage, singing in His honor, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna *in excelsis*."

The previous day, which was the Sabbath, Jesus had passed in the village of Bethania, where He had taken supper with Lazarus and other friends in the house of Simon the leper. He arose early next morning, which was Sunday, and made ready to set out from Bethania with His friends, passing through the district of Bethphage, across Mount Olivet, and through the valley of Josaphat, and entering Jerusalem in a public procession. There is a remarkable coincidence in the connection of these places. It was in Bethania that He had raised Lazarus to life. Bethphage was the place where the animals destined for sacrifice were kept, and whence they were led directly to be slain at the altar; whilst Mount Olivet was the place designated as the future scene of Christ's Ascension forty days after His Resurrection. In the valley of Josaphat, according to the prediction of the prophets, the great general judgment is to be held. "For behold, in those days I will gather together all nations and will bring them down (into)

the valley of Josaphat, for there I will sit to judge all nations round about" (*Joel*, iii).

Do we understand the deep prophetic sense of Christ's procession through these renowned places? It is as if He would say: "I who am the true and perfect Lamb of sacrifice, am to-day led solemnly into the temple of Jerusalem, and five days later I shall be slain in sacrifice as a sin-offering for all the world. But on a future day I will come back in triumph to call the dead from their graves to judgment. And after a faithful and impartial judgment, the good will accompany Me with the angels into heaven, where the new Jerusalem, the kingdom of the Son of God and of His elect, shall endure for all eternity."

Before speaking at length of the divine Master's entry into Jerusalem, let us meditate on the preparation which He made for this entry, as given to us by the holy evangelists.

1. THE PREPARATION

"And it came to pass on the following day, when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount called Olivet, He sent two of His disciples, saying: Go into the town which is over against you: at your entering into which, you shall find the colt of an ass tied, on which no man ever hath sitten: loose him and bring him hither. And if any man shall ask you: Why do you loose him? you shall say thus unto him: Because the Lord hath need of his service, and immediately he will let him come hither. And they that were sent went their way and found the colt standing, tied before the gate without, in the meeting of two ways, as He had said unto them. And they did as Jesus had commanded them, and they loosed him. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof, and some of them that stood there, said to them: Why loose you the colt? But they said, as Jesus had commanded them: Because the Lord hath need of Him. And they let him go with them. And they brought the ass and the colt to Jesus; and laid their garments upon them, and made Him sit thereon. And Jesus sat upon the colt. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way: and others cut boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke. These things

His disciples did not know at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him: and that they had done these things to Him."

Behold how considerate the Lord is to our feebleness of faith, to our obstinacy perhaps! Even in the Old Testament He defers to these weaknesses of ours; for He causes the most apparently insignificant circumstances of the life of Christ to be foretold by the prophets, in order that our faith, on witnessing the exact fulfillment of these predictions, may be strengthened, may have a certain and undoubted foundation to rest upon, and that we ourselves may, with fullest security, recognize in Jesus of Nazareth the long-promised and off-foretold Messiah. Thus the prophet Zacharias, more than 500 years before, had predicted the triumphal entrance of Christ, as the Prince of Peace: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: *Behold thy King* will come to thee, the Just and Saviour: He is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass. And I will destroy the chariot of strife, and the bow of war shall be broken; and He shall speak peace to the Gentiles" (*Zach.* ix. 9, 10).

Mention is here made of certain beasts of burden, that is, of an ass and of her foal, upon which latter no one yet had ridden: the church-fathers discover in the first a figure of the Jewish people upon whom for centuries the burden of the Mosaic law had acted; and in the colt a figure of the Gentiles, upon whom the sweet yoke of Christ was now to be placed for the first time. These writers also inform us that Christ rode the first part of His journey from Bethphage, up Mount Olivet, and through the valley of Josaphat, and near to the city, on the ass; but that he rode His actual entry into the streets of the city on the young foal.

2. THE SOLEMN ENTRY

"And as He went, they spread their clothes underneath in the way. And a great multitude that was come to the festival-day, when they had heard that Jesus was come to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees and went forth to meet Him, and cried: Hosanna, blessed be He who cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. As He went, many spread their garments underneath in the way; others cut down boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way. When He was now coming near the descent of Mount Olivet,

the whole multitude of His disciples began with joy to praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: Blessed be the King who cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory on high. And the multitude that went before and that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; blessed be the kingdom of our father David that cometh. Hosanna in the highest. The multitude, therefore, gave testimony which was with Him when He called Lazarus out of the grave, and raised him from the dead; for which reason also, the people came to meet Him, because they heard that He had done this miracle.

“The Pharisees, therefore, said amongst themselves: Do you see that we prevail nothing? Behold, the whole world is gone after Him. Master, rebuke Thy disciples. But He answered: I say to you, that if they shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.”

Here, reader, contemplate your divine Master as He passes so quietly and humbly across the valley of Josaphat. How simple and unpretending His modest retinue! The King of kings, without crown or sceptre, without body-guard or servants, rides not upon a noble steed, but upon the much-despised ass. With head uncovered, with naked feet, His countenance beaming with love and humble friendship, here He comes riding in the midst of His poor, illiterate disciples, who constitute His whole retinue. How very different will be His coming to that same valley of Josaphat on the judgment-day! Enthroned upon the clouds of heaven, surrounded with hosts of heavenly spirits, and in great power and majesty, His divine countenance will glow with wrath on the sinners and reprobates who have not utilized the days of grace and mercy. How all men will then prostrate themselves with reverence and dreadful expectancy before this King of kings! Honor Him, then, to-day with all your soul. Do not despise the outward lowliness of Him who comes riding into the royal city on an ass, but join the devout and simple people of Jerusalem in singing His praises; and not for to-day only, let every day of your life be a Palm Sunday, on which you will salute your blessed Lord in reverence and adoration, singing, “Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna *in excelsis*.”

But why does our Lord, in His formal entrance to Jerusalem, ride upon an unbroken animal, an ass's colt upon which

no one had ever sat? To declare to us His preference for the uncontaminated and innocent soul, and His love to dwell with such. He loves to take up His abode, with His grace and glory, in pure virgin hearts which have known no other owner but Him, and have not wasted their value and strength in the service of a sinful world. Happy are those parents who seek by careful vigilance, good example, and daily prayer, to keep their children in innocence and purity. But wo to those parents who, by tolerating and practicing luxury, pride, and forbidden pleasure, send their offspring to the devil, instead of leading them to Jesus Christ.

The people spread their garments on the ground for Christ to pass over them. This was a very touching act of homage; for these believing people, by throwing the best they had under Jesus' feet, thus acknowledge Him as their Lord and King. And this kind of homage is practised even in our own day. For the offerings made by the pious and generous people of all conditions, often in the face of mockery and anger from the children of the world, in aid of churches, schools, and other pious establishments, for the Holy Father, and for the support of the priests, are a species of homage offered to Christ the Lord. Nay, more. The blood of martyrs, the sufferings and penances of confessors, the unstained purity of virgins, are so many crimson, violet, and dazzling white robes which the Church has for centuries spread out in homage before and beneath the feet of her divine Spouse.

The crowd waved olive-branches and palm-leaves over the head of Jesus as He proceeded through the streets. Is there any mysterious meaning in the waving of these fresh green boughs? In the first place, these sappy and fragrant branches are symbolical of good works, especially of that love and good will toward our neighbor, which we hope to practice with and in Christ, and to hold before Him green and fragrant on the day of judgment. The palm branches signify the glorious victory of Christ, and our victory through Him, over sin, death, and hell. The olive-branches remind us of the sweet and happy peace which Christ, by His atonement, obtained for redeemed and reconciled creation. Such, too, is the triple meaning of those green branches, blessed by the Church each year, on Palm Sunday, with great solemnity and lengthy prayer, to be afterward reverently borne in procession, and then kept in the homes of the faithful, as an effective protection against the dangers of soul and body.

When taking part in the ceremonies of Palm Sunday, we should direct our closest attention to the deep instruction and suggestive meaning of the ritual. Human life is a pilgrim's progress, in the course of which the Christian should be carefully active to enrich himself with good works, as symbolized in the green boughs. While holding the blessed palms, he should remember that he is to strive for the attainment of victory over sin and hell, of which victory palm is the universally accepted emblem. As he kisses the olive-branch, he should excite in his heart a practical longing for heaven's happiness and peace, as symbolized by the olive-branch. The three loud raps made with the cross upon the church-door should remind him that admission to heaven is to be secured only by virtue of the three hours of sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross of Calvary. While retaining in his home the green twig of blessed palm, he should remember for what end and purpose the Church blessed that palm, when she pronounced the prayer, "Bless, O Lord, and sanctify these branches, that those who receive them may thereby receive protection for soul and body, and an efficient sign of grace; that in whatsoever place they may be retained, the inhabitants thereof may enjoy Thy blessing and be guarded by Thy right hand."

Those who accompanied Jesus from Bethphage, or who met Him on the way, raised their voices in His praise, singing hosannas. This Hebrew word is at once an exclamation of joy and an expression of good will, respect, and love for the person to whom it is addressed. And is not every religious procession such a hosanna? The man who, with proper dispositions, takes part in a religious procession, professes aloud and fearlessly before the eyes of the world his belief in Jesus Christ and his willingness to serve Him in love, joy, and gratitude. Although incredulity, religious indifference, and worldliness find fault with this public manifestation of homage and faith, a believing people will be as little affected by such strictures, as were the honest disciples by the pitiful remarks of the Pharisees.

The words "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord," are taken from the 117th Psalm, the same that contains the remarkable prediction concerning Jesus: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner." This psalm was sung every year, when the paschal lambs were led in solemn procession into Jerusalem five days

before the festival of the Passover. And Jesus, on this same fifth day before the great feast, is conducted as the true Paschal Lamb into the same city of sacrifice. It is surely by an interposition of the Holy Ghost, that the people salute Him in the same words in which but a few hours before they saluted the paschal lambs when led in by their keepers to be slain in the solemn sacrifices.

3. CHRIST WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM

But, alas, how fickle is human nature! how changeable the human heart! How unreliable is popular favor! how hollow and uncertain earthly honors and dignities! To-day the people would carry their Messiah on their shoulders into the city; to-day they give to their long-expected King a triumphant reception; to-day they shout hosannas in His favor; and after five short days these same people, instigated by their priests and scribes, cry out: "Crucify Him!" then place the cross upon His shoulders and put Him to death, and thus bring destruction upon their proud city of Jerusalem. Our all-seeing Lord foresees all this in the midst of the rejoicing, and He begins to grow sad, to weep, and to complain, as the holy gospel has it in the following words:

"And when Jesus drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

Once before, the Saviour had pronounced a similar ominous prediction about Jerusalem, and in bitter anguish of heart, had said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that were sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldst not. Behold your house shall be left to you desolate." Now the hour is at hand when this ill-fated city will complete its crime by laying violent hands upon the greatest of all the prophets, the Son of God Himself. And whilst the triumphant hosannas of the excited crowd are ringing in His ears, the whole dreadful picture of impending treachery, and of imminent ruin, and death, stands out clearly

before His mental gaze. "Hosanna" and "Crucify Him!" Palm Sunday and Good Friday! how close together they come, even, alas, in our own daily practice! Be prepared, Christian reader, for similar treatment. When men praise you and commend your works; when they admire your good qualities, extolling your beauty of person; when friends profess eternal fidelity, and fortune smiles the sweetest, be guarded; trust not earthly happiness; say often seriously to yourself: A single day can change all this. Do not let yourself be carried away. Even now, in the days of your prosperity, make yourself familiar with thoughts of future humiliation, of reverses, disappointments, and losses; not indeed in dejection, discouragement, or gloomy misanthropy, but in child-like submission to the hand of Him who, with infinite wisdom and paternal kindness, orders the destiny of every individual.

4. CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE. ENVY OF THE SCRIBES

"And when Jesus was come into Jerusalem, the whole city was moved, saying: Who is this? And the people said: This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God. And there came to Him the blind, and the lame in the temple: and He healed them. And the chief-priests and scribes seeing the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying: Hosanna to the Son of David, were moved with indignation. And said to Him: Hearest Thou what these say? And Jesus said to them: Yea; have you never read: Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings, thou hast perfected praise?"

The first visit of our Lord, after arriving at Jerusalem, was not to the royal castle of His ancestor David, but to the temple of the Lord; in order to show us, that although He was David's son and really a king, yet His first and all-important office was that High-priest, of Mediator and Redeemer. Yes, His first visit was to the temple, in order to offer to His heavenly Father all the homage which was now paid to Himself by the multitude. His first visit was to the temple in order to teach us that we, too, on first entering a town or village, should, if time and circumstances permit, make a short visit to the church, and there pay homage to God and beg His blessings on ourselves and our undertakings. Alas how few Christians in our day seem to trouble themselves about heaven's blessing, on which everything entirely depends!

The high-priests and scribes who throng the temple to-day, have no word of welcome, no word of praise for the Messiah. Sullen and envious, they stand, listening with ill-suppressed anger to the loud hosannas shouted by the innocent children in honor of the wonder-worker, of Him who is curing the lame and the blind and the deaf. How wonderful is the power in the stainless soul of a child! It sees and appreciates the divine and the true, when the mature and experienced, though blinded and passionate man, can discover nothing good. It feels itself irresistibly drawn to love and adore its Saviour, when the experienced man, hardened in selfishness, seems to have no heart to be drawn or influenced. Hence those words of the royal Psalmist are significant and ever memorable, where he tells us: "Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise" (*Ps. viii. 3*). How sublime the duty of the Christian mother! To her is entrusted the development of the confiding faith and of the sacred loving-power of the child, in order perhaps that the vivifying rays issuing from the pure soul of the child may, sooner or later, penetrate into the gloomy recesses of an unbelieving father's heart, and light up therein a knowledge and appreciation of divine mercy.

Whom do we find in the temple, next to the children, taking a kindly interest in Christ and approaching Him with respect and reverence? They are pagans, well-disposed, guileless Gentiles, as we learn from the evangelist.

5. THE GENTILES DESIRE TO SEE JESUS. A VOICE FROM HEAVEN

"Now there were certain Gentiles among them who came up to adore on the festival day. These therefore came to Philip who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying: Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying: The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal. If any man minister to Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also shall My minister be. If any man minister to Me, him will My Father honor. Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father,

save Me from this hour. But for this cause I came unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name. A voice therefore came from heaven: I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The multitude therefore that stood and heard, said that it thundered. Others said: An Angel spoke to Him. Jesus answered, and said: This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes."

In the beginning of His public ministry, our blessed Lord had enjoined His disciples to preach the gospel to the Jews, not to the heathens. Now, however, since the Jews rejected the salvation presented for their acceptance, the hour has come for the Gentiles to be admitted to Jesus, and for Him to be glorified by the heathens. True, the disciples had very mistaken notions about the manner in which their Master was to be glorified. When they saw these Gentiles seeking an interview with Him, they fondly hoped that now the time had come when their beloved Master would be recognized abroad, and honored and respected by the Gentiles. But Christ undeceived them, saying: "Yes, the time is at hand when the Son of God will be glorified; but, like the seed of the wheat, which must die in the soil before it can bring forth fruit, so must Christ die by the incredulity of the Jews, in order to grow, multiply, and produce fruit among the Gentiles." And in point of fact, what an abundant harvest has been gathered from the planting of this seed among the Gentiles! What are the thousands of martyrs, virgins, confessors, and saints, but the precious fruits produced from the crushed, broken, and buried seed, the crucified Saviour? In truth, the precious life laid down and sacrificed unto death by Christ for the salvation of the world, was revived, not only in His own personal resurrection, but it has been revived and multiplied a thousandfold in the pure and sanctified lives of all the saints. These have not foolishly loved their temporal life and its accidental goods, but have offered up all things for Christ's sake. Hence they have gained personal life for all eternity; whilst, moreover, from their sacrifice, a stream of life has flowed down upon the earth, as will be made manifest on judgment-day. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of new Christians."

To be sure, this self-sacrifice even unto death, is a thing that human nature recoils from with a shudder. Even this dread, this agonizing fear of death, our divine Master chose to feel and experience in His human nature, and more deeply and

keenly than man ever felt. "My soul is troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour." He used similar language in His agony in the garden of Olives: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away." Here, as in the first place, He wished to show clearly, impressively, and with certainty, that He had taken to Himself human nature with all its weaknesses, sin alone excepted, and with all its capabilities of suffering; that He had become, in the truest and fullest sense of the word, our companion in suffering. Here, too, He teaches that man can rise above this dreadful shrinking of His nature. For when He exclaims in the garden, "Father, not My will, but Thine be done," He says, as it were, "I will submit Myself to all the horrors of the death-hour in order to glorify My Father's name, His holiness, and His justice; for this purpose I came into the world. Behold, Father, I am ready." And now the Father shows in a solemn manner, by a miraculous voice from heaven, that He has accepted this honor, rendered by the hitherto continual self-denial of His Son, and that He will accept it till the completion of the sacrifice on Calvary. From this sacrifice, even unto death, flows a torrent of life to the world, that is, a glorious triumph over Satan the prince of this world, as well as the redemption of all those who incorporate themselves to Christ by faith and love. Hence the divine Master testifies further.

6. CHRIST, HAVING TAUGHT IN THE TEMPLE, GOES TO BETHANIA

"Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. (Now this He said, signifying what death He should die.) The multitude answered Him: We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth forever: and how sayest Thou: The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Jesus therefore said to them: Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things Jesus spoke: and He went away, and hid Himself from them. And whereas He had done so many miracles before them, they believed not in Him: that the saying of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he said:

Lord, who hath believed our hearing? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because Isaias said again: He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart: that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them: These things said Isaias when he saw His glory, and spoke of Him. However, many of the chief men also believed in Him: but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, that they might not be cast out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God. But Jesus cried, and said: He that believeth in Me, doth not believe in Me, but in Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent Me. I am come a light into the world: that whosoever believeth in Me, may not remain in darkness. And if any man hear My words, and keep them not, I do not judge him; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that despiseth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting. The things therefore that I speak, even as the Father said unto Me, so do I speak. And Jesus leaving them, having viewed all things round about, when now the eventide was come, went out of the city into Bethania with the twelve, and remained there."

Although Isaias had foretold of Christ's contemporaries, that the Lord should blind their eyes and harden their hearts, and although the evangelist adds, "therefore they could not believe," we must not forget that this most dreadful of all punishments, namely, blindness of the understanding and hardness of the heart, was visited upon the Jews because they deserved it. True, this punishment had been ordained in the immutable decrees of God, but only because He had foreseen from eternity the voluntary or free-will malice of the Jews. Christ did not come for the destruction, but for the saving of all men. Therefore, just because Jerusalem, in the persons of its chief people, rejected the message of salvation; because they persistently denied this saving word, confirmed and proved as it was by the most touching evidences of love and incontestable miracles of divine power, this very word became their judge and their punishment.

And yet, not all were so maliciously incredulous as to reject the saving word of the Redeemer. For the evangelist says plainly:

“However, many of the chief men also believed in Him but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, that they might not be cast out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.”

Alas for the cowardice of men! Miserable pusillanimity! thou art the gnawing, cancerous vice of our day. For fear of displeasing a fellow-mortal like himself, a man will deny, at least outwardly, the Son of the living God and give silent consent to all the persecutions and oppressions directed against His Church. In order not to appear “odd,” in order to be considered “enlightened,” the craven creature will cease his attendance at church and give up all the old-fashioned pious practices and principles of his forefathers. Rather than be excluded from the society of so-called enlightened people, he relinquishes his companionship with God. To what will such conduct lead us? O Jesus, have pity on us! do not punish our generation as its cowardice and fear of mortals must richly deserve. O permit the old courage, the solid decision of character which our fathers possessed, to return again to our hearts: lest, as upon Jerusalem, so upon our land and race, the chastisements of heaven should come down,—chastisements well earned by the irreligion of our public men and by the pliant servility of our people. These “leaders of the people” have, in the name of liberty and progress, declared war against Thy Church, and we, alas! are silent. Millions tremble, and tremble in silence, before the threatening words of a few wicked men.

CHAPTER III

THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE. THE BUYERS AND SELLERS IN THE TEMPLE

(MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK)

Matt. xxi. 12, 13, 18, 19; Mark xi. 12-17; Luke xix. 45-48

1. CHRIST CURSES THE BARREN FIG-TREE

UNDESERVING as were the Jewish people, our blessed Lord, in His mercy and love, made a final effort on Palm Sunday to soften their stony hearts. In deep humility, and overflow-

ing with sympathy and love for man. He had come publicly into their city, had performed miracles before their eyes in the temple, curing the lame and the blind, had preached to them all day, and had Himself and His teachings confirmed by a miraculous voice from heaven. And what were the fruits of this day of miracles? Alas, how indescribably sad the result of His efforts! The scribes and the Pharisees were more hardened than ever in their incredulity, while the few who did believe were too cowardly to avow their belief openly. Amongst this vast assemblage of the great and wealthy of Jerusalem, not one was found to offer shelter or food to our Saviour when the day was over. He was therefore compelled to return to Bethania and seek hospitality with His friend Lazarus and his devoted sisters.

“And in the morning of the next day, when they came out from Bethania, returning into the city, Jesus was hungry. And when He had seen afar off a fig-tree having leaves, He came, if, perhaps, He might find anything on it. And when He was come to it, He found nothing but leaves; for it was not the time for figs. And answering, He said to it: May no man hereafter eat fruit of thee; may no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And His disciples heard it. And immediately the fig-tree withered away and died.”

In this remarkable incident of our Saviour's life, the Church-fathers discover not only a proof of His miraculous powers, but an example of His just chastisement, and a symbol of the dreadful sentence to be executed upon useless people. As the hungry man desires food, so had Christ an eager yearning for the salvation of His nation. Two thousand years had elapsed since the selection of this people in the person of their father Abraham. In order to prepare them for salvation, God had favored them with an unbroken series of miracles, a grand and deeply significant public worship, the undoubted words of divinely-commissioned prophets, promises, warnings, counsel, threats, and finally, the sending of His only begotten Son. And now where were the fruits of this extraordinary dispensation of a merciful God? As He drew near, He found only leaves, that is, only an external ceremonial devoid of spirit and of the fear of God; only outward works without inward holiness, only a silly national pride, a vain boasting of their forefather Abraham and of the promises given to him; yet the utmost disregard for the very life and soul of these promises, the real Messiah, who now stood amongst them. The

Jewish nation had become like a barren fig-tree, on which, instead of fruits, only rustling dry leaves were to be found; and like the tree, now that the time of grace for them was at an end, they must bear the curse.

2. HE DRIVES THE DEALERS OUT OF THE TEMPLE

“And they came to Jerusalem, and Jesus was teaching daily in the temple. And when He went into the temple of God He began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves. And He suffered not that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And He taught them, saying to them: It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations: but you have made it a den of thieves. Which, when the chief-priests and the scribes and the princes of the people had heard, they sought how they might destroy Him. And they found not what to do with Him; for they feared Him, because the whole multitude was very attentive to Him, and in admiration at His doctrine. And when evening was come, He went forth out of the city.”

The fathers of the Church see three things in this purifying of the temple by Christ,—a glorious miracle, an impressive warning, and a symbolic action of much meaning. For is it not extraordinary that a poor Nazarene, who was heartily despised by the chief people among the Jews, would dare thus alone to disperse this crowd of persons, attacking and reproaching them with their unbecoming conduct; that the crowd of purchasers and sellers, money-changers and traders and temple-servants should have fled before the angry glance of the Son of man, and become so confused, frightened, and ashamed, that not one opposed Him, nor attempted any defence? “A heavenly fire,” says St. Jerome, “beamed from His eyes, and divine majesty sat enthroned upon His brow.”

But why did Jesus, who at other times was so mild and gentle, treat those people with such rigor? Because the respect due to the Most High was being trampled under foot, because the devotion of the people was disturbed, the silence and solemnity of the temple were displaced by the noise and clamor of the dealers and by the bleating and lowing of the cattle. But more especially because the Jewish priests allowed all kinds of oppressive usury to be practiced by those dealers whom they themselves had appointed; thus literally trans-

forming the house of God into a den of thieves. Animals for sacrifice were sold to the faithful at exorbitant prices. Moreover, as all the payments had to be made in Hebrew coin, strangers from distant districts were charged enormous discount on their money when changing it for the current coin. Such was the anger of Christ then, and such it is to-day at the desecration of His Father's house by those who disregard its sanctity; a warning for all time. Alas, how many temples would our Lord find to-day that need purifying!¹

Lastly, in this purifying of the temple by our Lord, in the cursing of the fig-tree, and in many other actions, we must not lose sight of the internal meaning. Christ opened His public career by a cleansing of the temple, and a similar act closes His active life. It is thus that He signifies to us the chief object of His public life. St. Paul thus beautifully explains this mystery: "Know you not that your members are temples of the Holy Ghost; that you are the temples of God wherein I shall fix My dwelling-place?" Christ came into the world to purify man, the spiritual house of God, from the stain of sin, from the foolishness of the world, from the tyranny of the flesh, and from the slavery of the devil, and to elevate it to its original dignity. "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy: which you are."

CHAPTER IV

THE POWER OF FAITH. CHRIST'S CONTROVERSIES WITH THE PHARISEES. VARIOUS PARABLES

(TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK)

Matt. xxi. 20; xxii. 14; Mark xi. 20; xii. 12; Luke xx. 1-19

1. THE POWER OF FAITH

"And when they passed by in the morning, the disciples saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter remem-

¹Down to a very recent date, some very ancient tablets might be seen in the porches of venerable churches, bearing the following significant question and answer: "What are the evil effects of talking in church? In the first place, it robs God of His glory, displeases the angels and saints, and deprives souls in purgatory of relief; in the second place, it stifles devotion in the worshipper, lessens the advantages of prayer, and even prevents its being heard; in the third place, it disedifies our neighbors and distracts him in his devotions: finally, it is a sin that will be punished in purgatory."

bering, said to Him: Rabbi, behold the fig-tree which Thou didst curse is withered away. And the disciples wondered, saying: How is it presently withered away? And Jesus answering, saith to them: Have the faith of God. Amen I say to you, if you shall have faith and stagger not, not only this of the fig-tree shall you do, but also whosoever shall say to this mountain:¹ Be thou removed and cast into the sea, it shall be done, if he shall not stagger in his heart, but believe that whatsoever he saith shall be done, it shall be done unto him. Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you. And when you stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man: that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your sins. But if you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven forgive you your sins.”

Our Saviour here imputes, as He did on a former occasion, a great, an omnipotent power to faith, so that we may well ask in astonishment: How can this be? And yet it must be so. For is not God our Father, all mighty, to whom nothing is impossible? Can anything be impossible to Him who made the world out of nothing; who every summer brings forth vast harvests from one little seed, and causes the tree which was lifeless and dry during winter, to put forth leaves, blossoms, and fruit in the summer? But remember that this mighty God is also our loving Father, an infinitely good and true Father to all His children. Hence it must be true that He can and will do, at all times, whatever is for the benefit of His children, even though, according to man’s reckoning, the greatest difficulties and hindrances should intervene.

But it is also true that such glad and unlimited trust can exist only in a true child of God. Only in proportion to our unconditional faithfulness and complete submission to our heavenly Father, and in proportion to the purity of our lives, may we venture to make use of this our Father’s power for our own purposes. To this truth the evangelist St. John testifies in the following words: “Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence toward God: and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight; and He that keepeth His commandments, abideth in Him, and He in him.” Hence the Christian may

¹The Mount of Olives, which they were then passing.

understand the saying of Christ: that it is only by virtue of the mysterious and close communion existing between the saint and his God, that his prayer can obtain all which it asks for, or he enjoy a share in the divine power, as may be seen clearly in the life of any saint.

2. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST AND THAT OF JOHN

“And they came again to Jerusalem. And when Jesus was walking in the temple, there came to Him as He was teaching, the chief-priests and the scribes and the ancients of the people, saying: Tell us by what authority dost Thou these things? and who hath given Thee this authority that Thou shouldst do these things? Jesus answering, said to them: I will also ask you one word: which if you shall tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or from men? Answer Me. But they thought within themselves, saying: If we shall say from heaven, He will say to us: Why then did you not believe him? But if we shall say from men, we are afraid of the multitude, that the whole people will stone us: for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. And answering Jesus, they said: We know not. He also said to them: Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Our Lord, by His counter-questions, had placed the scribes and high-priests in a difficult position, and let in a flood of light which revealed the whole gloomy abyss of their inconsistency and hypocrisy. For either they considered St. John to be an impostor and a deceiver of the people, in which case it became their duty as spiritual guides of the people to condemn him openly and at once; or else they looked upon him as a prophet sent from God, and in such case, they would be obliged to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, for St. John had on several occasions openly declared Him to be such. In their obstinacy, these blinded men would not do either one or the other, and were not ashamed to answer Jesus' question with a manifest lie, “We know not.” Hence Jesus punished them by pronouncing the following parable:

3. PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS SENT BY THEIR FATHER INTO THE VINEYARD

“And He began to speak to them in parables, saying: What think you? A certain man had two sons, and coming to the first, he said: Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. And he

answering, said: I will not. But afterward, being moved with repentance, he went. And coming to the other, he said in like manner. And he answering, said: I go, sir, and he went not. Which of the two did the father's will? They say to him: The first. Jesus saith to them: Amen I say to you, that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of justice, and you did not believe him; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: but you seeing it, did not even afterward repent, that you might believe him."

Thus the high-priest and scribes condemned themselves and pronounced their own sentence. They who had God's law constantly in their minds, who affected to consider themselves its most zealous and faithful adherents, rejected this law just at the decisive moment; when its completion had come in Jesus Christ, who had been announced so plainly and emphatically by John the Baptist. They who, by virtue of their being chosen by God in the person of their father Abraham, considered themselves to be the favored children of God and superior to all other nations, now denied this Sonship on the very day that the Son of God by His union with human nature, sealed it in truth. They also despised the friend of this bridegroom, John the Baptist, and rejoiced in their malice when Herod cast him into prison. Thus they were like the second son in the parable, who, in word, was willing, but in work, faithless and deceptive. Public sinners, on the contrary, publicans and even harlots, who at first had rejected the law of God, returned upon hearing penance preached by St. John, and hence found compassion and mercy at the hands of Jesus. The rejection of the Jews and the preferring of the Gentiles, are the two great truths which our Saviour wishes to inculcate in this and the two following parables.

4. PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD AND THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

"And He began to speak to the multitude this parable, saying: Hear ye another parable: There was a man an householder who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a strange country. And when the time of the fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits thereof. And the husbandmen laying hands on his servants, beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other

servants more than the former: and they did to them in like manner. Therefore, having yet one son, most dear to him: he also sent him unto them last of all, saying: They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen seeing the son, said among themselves: This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and we shall have his inheritance. And laying hold on him, they killed him: and cast him out of the vineyard. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? They say to him: He will bring those evil men to an evil end: and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, that shall render him the fruit in due season. Jesus saith to them: He will come and destroy those husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others. Which they hearing, said to him: God forbid. But he looking on them, said: What is this then that is written? have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? By the Lord this hath been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes: therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder. And when the chief-priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they knew that He spoke of them. And seeking to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes: because they held Him as a prophet."

It can not surprise us if the scribes at once felt that this parable related to themselves. Even the prophet Isaias 800 years earlier had declared it in his allegory or canticle of his Beloved One, namely, Jesus Christ, saying:

"I will sing to my beloved the canticle of my cousin concerning his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place. And he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ye men of Juda, judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes? And now I will show you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof: and it shall be wasted: I will



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break down the wall thereof: and it shall be trodden down. And I will make it desolate: it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged: but briars and thorns shall come up: and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel: and the man of Juda his pleasant plant: and I looked that he should do judgment, and behold iniquity: and do justice, and behold a cry. Wo to you that join house to house, and lay field to field, even to the end of the place: shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth? These things are in my ears, saith the Lord of hosts. Of a truth many great and fair houses shall become desolate, without an inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyards shall yield one little measure, and thirty bushels of seed shall yield three bushels."

In this allegory of Isaias, the vineyard signifies the Jewish nation whose unfaithfulness and consequent dreadful destruction the prophet foresaw and foretold. In the parable of Christ, the vineyard is that jewel entrusted to the Israelites, of the true faith, of divine worship, of grace, of law, of promises; in a word, the Church. The divine threats and chastisements are likened to a protecting wall around this spiritual vineyard; the wine-press was the altar on which flowed the blood of sacrificed animals, like fresh and fragrant wine; the tower in the midst of the vineyard was the consecrated temple at Jerusalem, the religious center of that nation; the tenants to whom the vinery was let out were the priests and scribes; the servants sent at different times to the vine-dressers were the prophets; the only Son is Jesus Christ, whom the ruthless vine-dressers cast out of the vineyard and slew. In these last words, our Lord alluded to the fact, that three days hence they would drag Him through the streets of Jerusalem, and put Him to death on the cross.

Without reflection, and even now a prey to the penalty of their blindness, the high-priests and scribes at once pronounced their own sentence: "He will come, and will destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others, that shall render him the fruit in due season." Yes indeed, these evil men will perish miserably in the days of Titus and Vespasian, who will turn Jerusalem into a desert, as Isaias had predicted. Yes, these treacherous husbandmen will meet a dreadful fate at the hands of the evil spirits in hell, to which place their souls will be sentenced for all eternity. But the vineyard, that precious depository of faith and grace, will

first be renewed, completed, and beautified, in Jesus Christ, and then be entrusted to other vine-dressers; that is, placed in charge of the apostles and their successors; whilst the blood of the martyrs, the unstained innocence of the virgins, the fortitude of her confessors, the good works of all her saints, will be the fruits which the newly-appointed vine-dressers will present to the divine Master as the products of the vineyard, as the fruits growing from the deposit of faith and of grace during all ages.

O insane folly of the Jews! Their faith, their religion, their hope, their dignity, their preferment above other nations, all this was founded entirely upon the Messias, and upon Him alone. Therefore when they rejected the foundation-stone of their system, the whole building fell to the ground.

5. PARABLE OF THE SUPPER

“And Jesus answering, spoke again in parables to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage: and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited: Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come ye to the marriage. But they neglected; and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise: and the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it, he was angry: and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he saith to his servants: The marriage indeed is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage. And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good: and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see the guests: and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in thither not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen. The Pharisees then left Him and went their way.”

Our divine Master had pronounced to the Jews a similar

parable on a former occasion. To-day He repeats it, and, by the addition of the murder which the ruthless guests had inflicted upon the servants, and by the fate of the guest who had appeared at the banquet without a wedding garment, makes it more striking and pointing more directly to his imminent death on the cross. He also adds to the significance of the supper, by making it a wedding supper;—a very beautiful and appropriate figure. For what is God's earthly kingdom in its foundation, in its continuance, and in its completion, but the marriage of the King of heaven's Son with humanity? The kingdom of God, in its very foundation, is the Incarnation of the eternal Word, who, in the chaste womb of Mary, united itself to human nature in an inseparable union forever. The kingdom of God, in its continued existence, is the Catholic Church, which Christ has won as a bride at the price of His heart's blood, and with whom He will be united all days, till the end of time. The kingdom of God, in its perfection on earth, is the holy communion in which Christ is truly, really, and substantially joined or married to the human soul, that it may live in Him and by Him. So then the glorious promise is fulfilled in God's kingdom on earth, as we have it in the book of the prophet Osee: "I will espouse thee to me forever: and I will espouse thee to me in justice and judgment, and in mercy, and in commiserations: and I will espouse thee to me in faith." Hence, too, the true and appreciative Christian reveres the virgin-womb of Mary, the holy cross, and the host, as the three chosen altars before which each of those mystic marriages has taken place between the Son of heaven's King and humanity, and still continues and perfects itself.

The Jews, as God's chosen people, were the first called or invited to a share in the graces of this wedding of the divinity to humanity; but those who were invited were not worthy, because they despised the kingdom of God, and abused the messengers sent out by the King. Then the King sent his soldiers, the Roman army, and in the destruction of Jerusalem, put these murderers to death and burned their city. The apostles were now sent out into the highways, that is, to the heathen nations of the earth, to enroll them as citizens of God's kingdom. And they came in countless numbers from every land thronging to the wedding-feast of the lamb that was slain; so that to-day there is not a single known nation in all the five divisions of the globe which has not its repre-

sentative at the wedding-table of Jesus Christ, the holy Roman Catholic Church.

But the mere act of sitting at the banquet, the mere outward participation in the kingdom of Christ, by baptism and faith, is not sufficient; as the second part of the parable fearfully proves. That guest who was so summarily visited with ejection and dreadful punishment, had hearkened to the invitation and obeyed it, had been admitted by the palace-door, that is, by baptism, and had taken his place at the supper-table. He thus had faith, but alas, no wedding garment; and although a guest at God's table, he was rejected. Thus we see how indispensably necessary it is to always wear this spiritual wedding garment.

It was the custom in eastern lands, and it still prevails in some parts, for wealthy persons to send rich outside garments to all the guests whom they invited to their weddings. Such garments had evidently been sent by the lord in the parable to his invited guests. Yet one of them was careless and forgetful, or else thought too much of himself to accept the proffered article of clothing, or to wear it to the festival. According to the universal explanation of commentators, this wedding garment is a figure of full and complete justness, that is, a righteousness imparted to us through the intervention of the sacraments of baptism and penance, and which is, therefore, styled the justice of Christ. This justice resulting from our union of intention and of action with the spirit and example of Jesus Christ, constitutes true innocence and genuine holiness of life. It is in this sense that St. Gregory the Great says: "He who has faith and is devoid of charity, is without a wedding garment." St. Iræneus adds: "The wedding garment is the works of righteousness."

CHAPTER V

THE COIN OF TRIBUTE. THE LIFE HEREAFTER. THE GREAT COMMANDMENT. JESUS PUTS THE PHARISEES TO SHAME AND CONDEMNS THEM

(TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK)

Matt. xxii. 15-23, 39; Mark xii. 13-40; Luke xx. 20-47

1. THE COIN OF TRIBUTE. DUTIES TO AUTHORITY

"THEN the Pharisees going, consulted amongst themselves

how to ensnare Jesus in His speech. And being upon watch, they sent spies who should feign themselves just. These were some of the Pharisees and their disciples, with the Herodians—that they might deliver Him up to the authority and power of the governor—who, coming, say to Him: Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker and carest not for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us, therefore, what dost Thou think, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? But Jesus knowing their wiliness and wickedness, said: Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the coin of the tribute, that I may see it. They offered Him a penny. Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to Him: Cæsar's. Then He saith to them: Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God, the things that are God's. And hearing this, they wondered, and leaving Him, went their ways; they held their peace, for they could not reprehend His word before the people."

Here, whilst the answer of our blessed Teacher exhibits profound wisdom and a salutary moral lesson applicable to all times and circumstances, the Jewish inquirers betray, both in their question itself and manner of putting it, the dreadful nature of their secret malice.

Who are these inquisitors? They are disciples of the Pharisees and the friends of Herod. The pharisaical scribes impel their disciples into the cunning artifice partly to accustom them early to the practice of falsehood and deceit, and partly by an apparent innocence and anxiety of young pupils to acquire knowledge, the more certainly to draw out an answer from the Saviour. What base trickery! But this was not all their meanness, for they take the Herodians into their confidence. The latter were a sect of free-thinking Jews, who, for more than half a century, had devoted themselves to the fortunes of the royal family of the Herods, and were joined with these to lead the Jewish people into unbelief and Roman paganism. For this purpose, they furthered the Roman customs, encouraged Roman games, upheld and approved, as a natural consequence, the rights of majesty, the violent intermeddling of the State in church-affairs, and the application of church possessions to civil purposes, and whenever the opportunity offered, they helped to abolish the national and religious peculiarities of the Jews. Thus the Herodians were the enlightened, advanced, pagan-Roman party of the nation;

whilst the Pharisees sought to be the patriotic-Jewish, old-faith, law-abiding party. At present, both of these parties, forgetting their mutual hatred and the gulf intervening between them, join hands, like loving brothers, in order to overthrow the divine Teacher. What madness!

Now observe with what hypocrisy the Pharisees and Herodians propose their question. "Master, we know that Thou art a just man, a lover of truth, that Thou speakest and teachest, and asketh nothing of any man: for Thou art not a respecter of persons, but pointest out the way of God in truth." They style Jesus master in order to work themselves into His confidence, to throw Him off His guard. They praise His fearlessness and independence, in order to entice Him into a rash and dangerous assertion, by which He must come into conflict either with the government party on the one hand, or with the old Jewish opposition party on the other.

The question proposed was the best they could select for their purpose. They calculated that Jesus must either give an affirmative answer, and thereby recognize the duty of the Jews to pay tribute to the pagan emperor, in which decision the Pharisees would find a pretext for denouncing Him to the people as their enemy and the friend of Cæsar; else He must deny the right, and here the Herodians would find cause to complain of Him as a disturber among the people, who denied the right of the emperor to levy and collect taxes, would drag Him before the courts and force Him to be sentenced as a violator of the rights of royalty. Alas, my loving and merciful Lord and Saviour! How Thy heart must have bled at this exhibition of mean hatred! Thou hast come to bring peace and God's friendship to all men, and Thou didst find enemies arrayed on every side of Thee. Thou hadst come to lift the human family from the gloomy depths of sin, and here malice was digging pits on all sides of Thee with the vain, but no less malicious hope of burying Thee forever in their depths.

But our divine Lord discovering their artifice, sends a piercing look through them, and with a few quiet words, tears asunder the net in which they would entrap Him. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." Foolish men! By the very act of recognizing the imperial coin as the currency of the country, by receiving and paying it out, as a legal tender, they admitted the legality of the imperial government. Hence it fol-

lows: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." Here Christ pronounced a universally binding moral precept. For no duty is clearer or more certain than that of assisting the civil authority in securing to ourselves and our fellow-citizens good government. It is to good government that we are indebted for the protection of life and property, for the defense of our rights and liberties against foreign and domestic enemies, for the protection of commerce, for the maintenance of order and of public confidence. Hence it is plainly our duty to observe scrupulously every law of the land, and to be willing to lend our aid and support in its defense.

This duty, which is imposed upon all men by the mere law of nature, becomes, in a special manner, a religious obligation on Christians. For Christ said to His apostles, and through them, to all Christians: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." No less plain and emphatic are the words of St. Paul the Apostle: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. Wherefore, be subject of necessity, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Render, therefore, to all men their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

We must not fail to observe here, that Christ and His apostles laid down these principles and taught the binding effect of them at a time when all the existing rulers were pagans and many of them very wicked men. Hence we may infer that the true Christian must not presume to refuse allegiance to the existing government of his country, even if its administrators prove derelict in their solemn duty as legislators.

2. CONVERSATION OF CHRIST WITH THE SADDUCEES CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE TO COME

"And the same day there came to Him the Sadducees who say there is no resurrection: and they asked Him saying: Master, Moses wrote unto us, that if any man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up seed to his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died leaving no issue. And the second took her, and died:

and neither did he leave any issue. And the third in like manner. And the seven all took her in like manner: and did not leave issue. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise again, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering saith to them: Do ye not therefore err, because you know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God? For when they shall rise again from the dead, they shall neither marry, nor be married, but are as the angels in heaven. The children of this world marry and are given in marriage; but they who shall be accounted worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead, shall neither be married nor take wives. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. And as concerning the dead that they rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spoke to him, saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him. You therefore do greatly err.

“And some of the scribes answering, said to Him: Master, Thou hast said well: and the multitudes hearing it, were in admiration with His doctrine, and after that they durst not ask Him any more questions.”

The Mosaic law, here mentioned, was enacted for the comfort of childless widows at a time when childlessness was considered a great disgrace, and motherhood a great blessing and honor. Moreover, the Sadducees, in their questionings, had no other object than to ridicule the doctrines of resurrection and of eternal life. For, thought they, in their would-be cunning and attempt at ridicule, if there be a resurrection and an eternal life to come, every wife must necessarily belong, in that life, either to one of her first husbands or to all together. Both positions would be wrong: in the first case, in regard to justice; in the other, to morality. Fools that they were! They could not discover that there was a solution to this difficulty in the truth that in eternity the wife would belong to no man, for married life will cease after the resurrection. For, as then the number of elect will be completed and death shall have been overcome, it will be no longer necessary to supply the places of the dead by a new generation. Those who will be risen to the new life will resemble the angels, being entirely exempt from all desires of the

flesh, exempt from suffering, immortal, and capable of enjoying the beatific vision of God. O glorious and happy condition, in which all misery, all danger, all decay and corruption of our body shall have forever ceased, and the glorified body of man shall share in the blissful freedom of the soul! O great and all-excellent dignity of Christian marriage and holy virginity, which, according to the testimony of Christ Himself, makes us here below like the angels; and even in this life of slavery, secures a happy freedom for the body.

3. THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW

“The Pharisees hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, came together; and one of them, a doctor of the law, that had heard them reasoning together, seeing that Jesus had answered them well, asked Him, tempting Him: Master, which is the great commandment, the first commandment of the law? Jesus answered him: The first commandment of all is, Hear, O Israel! the Lord thy God is one God; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.

“And the scribes said to Him: Well, Master, Thou hast said in truth that there is one God, and there is no other besides Him; that He should be loved with the whole heart, with the whole understanding, with the whole soul, and with the whole strength; and to love one’s neighbor as one’s self is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices. Jesus seeing that He had answered wisely, said to him: Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.”

There was, in our Saviour’s time, among the Jews, much violent discussion and disagreement concerning which was the greatest and most important of all the commandments. Most of them, especially the Pharisees, maintained that a strict observance of the law of sacrifice and of other ritualistic regulations, or the mere external practices of worship, constituted man’s chief duty to God. Very few had any idea that the very life and soul of true religion consists in man’s complete and freely given love for God, and for his neighbor for God’s

sake; and that the whole outward worship of man to God and his obedience to church-discipline are but the mere expression of true internal piety and virtue.

We here witness a very remarkable paradox, an absurdity of much significance even for our own times. The scribes and many of the Pharisees had read the Scriptures and studied them closely with the view of solving the problem of man's life. They knew the hundred and one meanings which their great doctors of the law had given of every Bible-passage; yes, they could tell to a unit how often each letter of the alphabet occurred in the holy book. Yet the true and proper spirit of the Bible was, to their minds, an unsolved problem or enigma, and they were ignorant of the all-important sense and meaning of written revelation. In their wilful blindness, they could not see the very source itself of all light, of which the precepts of the law and the teachings of the prophets were but the radiating gleams. And is not this the case with many of the so-called learned men of our times? Their whole life is devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Their restless minds burrow and grope through the laws of nature, through the mysteries of the human soul, through the imperfect fossil remains of an extinct race of men or animals, yet they fail to discover or recognize the all-important and necessary truth, the veritable origin, center, and end of all created matter—God Himself.

And what constitutes the chief essence and aim of all divine law? Supernatural charity; that sacred fire of the heart which is kindled at the burning shrine of a believing knowledge of God, the highest, purest, and most perfect of beings.

And is not this charity, this supernatural love for God and for our neighbor, the most natural and self-explaining, the most easily understood of duties? Must not the human heart of a necessity become inflamed with the most ardent and admiring love for God, as the soul sees and contemplates His infinite beauty and perfection? Can any man look upon the goodness, kindness, mercy, and forbearance of his Creator without feeling himself compelled to bring to Him the thank-offering of a grateful and loving heart? The reward for such love consists in a remission of our sins, in a blissful interior peace of mind, in augmented and improved faculties of soul, in an indisputable right to the everlasting happiness of heaven. Now, can man afford to forego these inestimable blessings? And why is a law required to compel us to do

what ought to be considered a great privilege and what is certainly conducive to our own interests? Alas! this is one of the consequences of the desolation precipitated upon our souls by sin. A thousand deceptive phantoms obtrude themselves upon the mind of man, bewilder his imagination, and seek to insinuate themselves into the love of his heart, so that in the end there is no desire or room left for eternal truth, the only thing worthy of love.

Therefore man, sensual and worldly creature that he is, must be constantly aroused by the voice of thunder from Mount Sinai: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." If the soul but once allow itself to be thoroughly aroused by this appeal, stimulated to increased solicitude for the preservation of love's fires, if it but make an attempt to bury itself in the contemplation of God's infinite beauty and amiable perfections, and to taste the sweet joy of loving God, such a law would be come at once superfluous; for the love of God would soon become its most pressing want, its greatest delight, the sweetest and most exclusive business of its existence, so that it would cry out with St. Augustine: "Why, O Lord, dost Thou command me to love thee? Would it not be more than I deserve to be permitted to love Thee? Thou dost threaten with much misery him who will not love Thee, as if there could be any misery greater than the misery of not loving Thee! Yes, I shall ever love Thee, O beauty without beginning or end. Alas, how late I am, how tardy in beginning to love Thee. Why am I unable to love Thee as Thou dost desire and deserve to be loved?"

The holy Scriptures teach us that we must love God with all our heart and with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. This repetition of words of apparently similar meaning contains the impressive warning that heavenly love must embrace, enliven, and inflame our whole existence and essence. We must love God with our whole heart, that is, all the power of our will must be directed toward God. In Him we should seek all our pleasures and peace of body and mind, and combat and defeat, for love of Him, every temptation to sin. We must love God with our whole soul, that is, all our power of knowing should be consecrated to God; intellect, reason, memory, should be all employed to discover and express the amiability of our Lord and God. We must love God with all our mind, that is, our whole faculty of

sense should be made subservient to heavenly love, so that we may give ourselves up with all the confidence and abandon of children to the best of Fathers. We must love God with all our strength. That means we must employ the whole of our physical being as an instrument of the loving soul to give expression to internal love by means of works of godliness, to the glory of our heavenly Father and to the spiritual advantage of our fellow-creatures. Every true Christian should have this one aim in view, as his sublimest and only necessary object in life; God, that is, the glory of God, perfect unison with the will of God, and future happiness in God. Then, and then only, will his love be, as it should be, embracing his whole being. Wherever this love prevails in a human soul, then the law is fulfilled, because then the whole outer and inner man has become an instrument to do God's will. And where this love does not exist, all else is of no value before God for eternity. Hence St. Paul says: "If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; and if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge: and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Love for our neighbor is contained and implied, as a necessary consequence, in love for our God. And if our divine Teacher speaks of this love for our fellow-man, as a second commandment like unto the first, He does so for a threefold purpose: in the first place, to express the intimate connection and inseparableness of love for God with love for our fellow-man, also to remove a dangerous misunderstanding, to combat the errors of the Pharisees, who held that a man was not to be troubled at the adversity of his neighbor, and finally, to show us that in loving our fellow-man we have the only sure test that we love God, as explained by the evangelist St. John: "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?"

In the command to love our neighbor, three things become a matter of duty: first, that we esteem every man for whatever of God is in him; secondly, that we sympathize in his welfare or misfortune; thirdly, that we assist him to obtain both

temporal and spiritual happiness in proportion to his necessities and in accordance with our own means and ability. What a beautiful and true description St. Paul gives us of this virtue of charity! "Charity is patient, is kind: Charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed."

Such love of one's neighbor springs from the very love that we have for God. For, if I love the triune God, my Lord and Creator in heaven, how could I despise or dislike His image on earth? If I love the heavenly Father, how can I be indifferent to His child? If I love Him, who in His infinite love and mercy for the human family, poured out His blood upon the cross, how can I hate the members of that family, every one of whom He loved and made a sharer in His bleeding sacrifice? If I love the King of the heavenly realm, how can I despise those whom He has called to be companions and fellow-rulers in His celestial kingdom. One duty can not be separated from the other.

Therefore, Christian reader, preserve and practice scrupulously, not only love for God, but also the sacred duty of loving your neighbor. Keep alive in your heart the double-tongued flame of charity for Creator and creature. As your Father in heaven maketh the sun to shine upon the good and the bad, so let your eye beam with affection, your heart glow with kindness, and your hand be generously extended to friend and foe, so that you may, at the time of reckoning all things, be found perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.

4. JESUS, THE SON OF DAVID AND THE SON OF GOD

"And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus, teaching in the temple, asked them: What think you of Christ? Whose son is He? They said to Him: David's. Whereupon He answering, said: How do the scribes say that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself saith, by the Holy Ghost, in the Book of Psalms: The Lord said to My Lord: Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool. David, therefore, calleth Him Lord; and whence is He then his Son? And no man was able to answer Him a word.

Neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions; and a great multitude heard Him gladly."

For never had they listened to such a Teacher. How prudently He had replied to the crafty questionings of the Herodians concerning the coin of tribute! How aptly and gently He reproved and corrected the unbelieving Sadducees, and refuted their objections to the doctrine of the resurrection! And finally, when the Pharisees attempted to implicate Him in difficulty by propounding the most exciting question of the time, how wise and safe was His decision! Hence the multitude looked with wonder and with believing reverence on the great Teacher who had put to shame and reduced to silence the Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees successively and successfully.

But this faith is not sufficient. Jesus is incomparably more and greater than a wise Teacher. He is the Son of God. And He endeavors now to engage the attention of the people to this mystery of His divinity by asking the question: "What think you of Christ: whose Son is He?" Our Lord had previously proposed a similar question to His apostles: "Whom do you say that I am?" It was then that Peter was inspired from heaven, and replied: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This answer even the Pharisees might have made, had they but glanced at the 109th Psalm. For in this passage of Scripture the Messiah is designated not only as David's Lord, but also as the consubstantial, only begotten Son of the eternal Father. "From the womb, before the day-star, I begot Thee." But the worldly minded creatures could not or would not ascend to this sublime height of faith, and comprehended in the Messiah only the human nature as David's Son, and not His more exalted nature and dignity of Son of God.

Consider here the dreadful guilt and malice of the scribes and Pharisees. They had made the reading and examination of the Scriptures the special work of their lives, and required the people to recognize them as their moral advisers and instructors, and hence had assumed entire and exclusive responsibility for the religious opinions of the people. And now, when the long-expected Messiah had come, when the prophecies of the books of Moses, of the Psalmist, and of the other prophets, have all been verified in Him in the clearest and plainest manner, these self-appointed teachers stand in silence, hesitation, and unbelief, before the veritable Messiah,

and by their evil example, induce the people who were disposed to believe, to the denial and rejection of their Redeemer.

5. HE THREATENS THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

“Then Jesus spoke to the multitude, who heard Him gladly, and to His disciples, and said to them in His doctrine: The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not, for they say and do not. They bind insupportable burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them. And all their works they do for to be seen of men. For they make pylacteries broad, and enlarge their fringes. They love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and salutations in the market-place, and to be called by men, Rabbi. Who devour the houses of widows under the pretence of long prayer. These shall receive greater judgment, but be not you,” added the divine Master, then directing His discourse to the disciples alone, “be not you called Rabbi; for one is your master, and all you are brethren. And call none your father upon earth; for one is your father who is in heaven; neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, Christ.”

“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant: and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted.”

“Beware of the scribes and Pharisees who love to walk in long robes and to be saluted in the market-place, and to sit in the first chairs of the synagogue and to have the highest places at suppers, who devour the houses of widows under the hypocritical pretence of long prayer.”

“Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for yourselves do not enter in and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter.”

“Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers. For this you shall receive the greater judgment.”

“Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you go round about the sea and the land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves. Wo to you, blind guides, who say: Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing:

but he that shall swear by the gold of the temple, is a debtor. Ye foolish and blind; for whether is it greater, the gold, or the temple which sanctifieth the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift upon it, is a debtor. Ye blind; for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? He, therefore, that sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things that are upon it; whosoever shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth in it; and he that sweareth by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon. Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law: judgment, and mercy, and faith. These things you ought to have done, and not leave those undone. Blind guides, you strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

"Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of extortion and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean. Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you are like the whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness. So you also outwardly, indeed, appear to men just; but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

"Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; who build the sepulchres of the prophets, and adorn the monuments of the just, and say: If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you are witnesses against yourselves, that you are the sons of them who killed the prophets. Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell? Therefore behold I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you will put to death, and crucify: and some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the just, even unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom you killed between the temple and the altar. Amen I say to you all these things shall come upon this generation. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the

prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not? Behold, your house shall be left to you, desolate. For I say to you, you shall not see Me henceforth till you say: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

From this scathing and unsparing reprimand with which the otherwise mild and gentle Saviour scourged the scribes and Pharisees in the presence of the assembled multitude, we may infer that the law of charity, although decidedly pronounced by Christ to be the fundamental law of His kingdom, does not altogether exclude the rigorous exercise of severe chastisement. Stiff-necked malice—such malice as, under the pretence of magnanimity, self-righteousness, and zeal for the law, imperil the salvation, by poisoning the faith and good will of the unsuspecting people, leading them to perdition—that such malice must be unmasked and rendered harmless. Hence the Saviour unmask now, as He had done some months previously, and in the most positive and unsparing language, these deceivers of the Jewish people, who, by arbitrary principles and rigorous interpretation of the Mosaic law, embarrassed the believing people, whilst allowing to themselves in secret the most criminal disregard of that same law. The sacred dignity of the office of teacher with which these unworthy men were clothed, naturally drew forth the respect and esteem of the common people, owing to the veneration entertained by these people for ancient customs and traditions, secured their complete submission to the pretended upholders and defenders of these laws. These proud and unprincipled teachers shall now, however, be exposed to the people, so as to be no longer able to deprive them of salvation in Christ the Saviour.

Hence Christ pronounces, in contradistinction to the eight beatitudes of the good, the eight woes so justly merited by the scribes and Pharisees. Wo to them! for they despise the kingdom of truth and grace in Christ, not only to their own destruction, but by their influence hold the people back from its acceptance. Wo to them! because the lengthy, spiritless prayers on their lips have no higher object than to extort abundant offerings from the simple people. Wo to them! because their efforts at converting souls are directed, not to the promotion of God's glory, but to the heightening of their own reputation and the swelling of the coffers of the temple,

and thus, by their bad example, confirming unbelievers in their persistency. Wo to them! because their inordinate desire to increase the revenues of the temple, leads them to trifle with the sacredness of solemn oaths. Wo to them! because they are concerned only for the letter of the law and not for its spirit, and affect to consider ceremonial ordinances, prescribed for times and circumstances long since passed away, as of more importance than the eternal law of morals. Wo to them! because they, by their outward bodily afflictions and ostentatious observance of the law, dispense themselves from the duty of internal purity and holiness of life. Wo to them! because, like whitened sepulchers, they present themselves to the people as hypocrites—as being what, in reality, they are not. Wo to them finally! because they erected memorials to the murdered prophets, at the same time that they were plotting the death of the greatest of all the prophets. They trifled with the time of visitation and rejected the Messias, and together with Him the calling and selection and salvation of the Hebrew nation.

However, toward the end of the world, their descendants will at last be converted and embrace the faith of Him who will then come as the Judge of the living and the dead. For it is so written in the prophecy of Osee: "For the children of Israel shall sit many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without altar, and without ephod, and without theraphim; and after this the children of Israel shall return, and shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king: and they shall fear the Lord, and His goodness in the last days."

CHAPTER VI

THE WIDOW'S MITE. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. THE GENERAL JUDGMENT

(TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK)

Matt. xxiv. 1-41; Mark xii. 41; xiii. 32; Luke xxi. 1-33

IT WAS the evening of Tuesday, in the week of His holy passion. He had returned from the temple, after spending the whole day in refuting the errors and rebuking the malice

of the Jews, and now having gone out from the city, He was sitting, surrounded by His disciples, on Mount Olivet, directly opposite to the temple. Here fell from His sacred lips that appalling prediction of Jerusalem's punishment and of the last judgment, which is read every year from the altar for the people's instruction and meditation, on the last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year and on the first Sunday of Advent.

1. THE WIDOW'S MITE

Before reviewing this awful picture of ruin and desolation, let us listen awhile to the holy evangelists, Mark and Luke, who present us with a lovely and touching subject for our admiration and study—the offering made in the temple by the poor widow.

“And Jesus sitting over against the treasury, beheld how the people cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And calling His disciples together, He saith to them: Amen I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she, of her want, cast in all she had, even her whole living.”

The offerings deposited by the people in the contribution-box of the temple were devoted to the support of the priests, the maintenance of divine service, and to the relief of the poor. And as it is to-day a pious and praiseworthy custom to show our thankfulness to God for the blessings of public worship by making offerings in proportion to our means, in order to keep up the worship of God, His house, and His ministers, so too were the Jews in the habit of making an offering of gold each time that they went to the temple.

It is laudable for persons of means to give alms in this or some similar way. For Christ really and truly accepts whatever is offered for the maintenance of religion or the relief of the poor, just as if it were offered personally to Himself. And the words of the devout and generous Tobias, “Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness” (*Tob. iv. 11*), are ever true for all men and for all circumstances and for all times. When, therefore, the rich man, for God's sake and with modest discretion, deprives Himself of a portion of His wealth for the benefit of His Church, or in aid of the poor, He performs a laudable

and salutary act. But why do we say: For God's sake and with modest discretion? Because many persons make large donations in order to attract the admiration of the world and to acquire, by their ostentatious liberality, the plaudits of their fellow-men. It is sad to think and to know that not one cent of such donations will be entered to their credit on the book of eternal rewards. On the contrary, the selfish and interested giver will hear on the last day the dismal words: "Verily, thou hast had thy reward." Others there are, too, who give freely and cheerfully, but who never think to give their alms with regard to God, or for love of Christ. They give without reflection, and just because the wants of their fellow-men awake their sympathy. How sad for the gifts of such generous-hearted people! Certainly our heavenly Father will not suffer their benevolence to go unrewarded, but their actions have no value for eternity, for they are not done for God's sake. Let the rich, therefore, if they would have their acts meritorious and pleasing in the eyes of heaven, make their offerings for God and out of love for Him alone; then will temporal reward be granted in this life, as well as eternal compensation hereafter.

How much more laudable and touching are the offerings of the poor! The laborer who takes from his hard-earned and scanty wages an offering for the Church, or an alms for the poor; the servant-girl, who, forgetting her own wants, is happy to decorate the altar, or to clothe a poor person; the artless child who foregoes his toy and his sweets in order, for Jesus' sake, to place his pennies in the trembling hand of a beggar; such spectacles are truly sublime and ennobling. Spectacles worthy of the glorious days of primitive Christianity, when a holy pope, Clement, said to the poor: "And if you have no means of giving alms, fast and then share with the saints what was intended for yourselves." O blessed are such poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2. CHRIST FORETELLS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

"Jesus being come out of the temple, went away. His disciples came to show Him the buildings of the temple: and some saying of the temple that it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, one of His disciples saith to Him: Master, behold what manner of stones and what buildings are here. Jesus answering, said to them: Do you see all these things? all these great buildings? Amen I say to you, the days will

come in which there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone that shall not be thrown down.”

History bears testimony to the exact fulfilment of this prophecy of our Lord, and relates the complete destruction of this doomed temple. The Roman general Titus would have gladly saved the temple—for it was a splendid masterpiece of beauty, strength, and elegance. He accordingly gave orders to his soldiers that, in plundering and sacking the city, they should spare the sacred edifice. One of them, however, disregarding, or, in his excitement forgetting his commander's orders, threw a burning torch into the sacred building, which set it on fire. The struggle in the immediate vicinity of the temple was so violent and exciting, that no one discovered the fire till it was too late to get it extinguished. Three hundred years later, the Roman emperor, Julian the Apostate, wishing to contradict the prophecy of Christ and the prediction of Daniel, that the temple would remain a ruin forever, announced to the Jews scattered throughout his empire that the time had come for the restoration of their temple; telling them that he himself would help the work by contributing money and skillful workmen. The Jews flocked from all quarters, bringing munificent supplies of money and material to further the emperor's designs. The Jewish women gave their jewelry and costly ornaments, and some of the wealthiest and most refined among them were seen every day drawing building-stone with their own hands. Meanwhile the Christians dwelling in Jerusalem were subjected to gross indignities and mockeries on the part of the elated Jews. St. Cyril, who was then the devout and exemplary bishop of that see, looked with calmness and confidence upon these vast preparations, and consoled the Christians by quietly and confidently calling their attention to the words of Christ in the holy gospel. The trenches were now open, the new foundations were ready to be laid next morning, and the Jews already began to triumph. Suddenly there burst forth from the bowels of the earth a flaming torrent of fire which dislodged the stones, melted the iron implements, and burnt the workmen to cinders. At every attempt on the part of new hands to renew the work, a similar disaster occurred, till the work was finally abandoned. The ruins of the temple remain to this day, without one stone upon another—a permanent witness to the truthfulness of Him who said not a stone would be left upon a stone which would not be destroyed.

3. THE SIX SIGNS PORTENDING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. THE GENERAL JUDGMENT

The apostles, joining in their minds all these prophetic words just heard from the mouth of their divine Master, with all His previous predictions about the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and the last judgment, supposed that these three great events were to take place at an early day. They eagerly inquired of Jesus when these things would come to pass and what would be the premonitory signs. Our Lord, adapting Himself to their powers of comprehension, gave them an explanation of the signs that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem, and of those that are to occur just before the end of the world. Then, for the first time, He mentions in particular the chastisements in store for the deicide city, and concludes with a description of the last judgment. The evangelist gives His words:

“And as Jesus sat on the Mount of Olivet, over against the temple, the disciples came to Him privately; and Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, asked Him apart, saying: Master, tell us when all these things shall be, and what shall be the sign when all those things shall begin to be fulfilled, what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the consummation of the world?

“Jesus answering, said: Take heed, lest any man seduce you: for many will come in My name, saying: I am Christ; and the time is at hand. They will seduce many; go ye not, therefore, after them.

“When you shall hear of wars and seditions and rumors of wars, be not terrified. These things must first come to pass, but the end is not yet presently. Then He said to them: Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There shall be great earthquakes in divers places, and pestilences and famines, and terrors from heaven, and there shall be great signs. Now all these things are the beginnings of sorrows.

“But take heed, for before all these things they will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons. Look to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten, and you shall stand before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony unto them. Lay it up, therefore, in your hearts, when they shall lead you and deliver you up, not to meditate before how you shall answer; but

whatsoever shall be given ye in that hour speak ye. For I shall give you a mouth and wisdom which all your enemies shall not be able to resist and gainsay; for it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

“You shall be betrayed by your parents and brethren, and kinsmen and friends, and some of you will they put to death. And the brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son. And the children shall rise up against the parents, and shall work their death, and you shall be hated by all men for My name’s sake. Then shall many be scandalized, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall seduce many, and because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold; but he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved. But a hair of your head shall not perish. In your patience you shall possess your souls. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to the whole world, for a testimony to all nations; and then shall the consummation come.”

As already stated, our Lord describes in these words both events together; the ominous signs preceding the chastisement of Jerusalem, and the premonitory signs of the general judgment at the last day. They are related as being six in number.

In the first place, false prophets and impostors will rise up, declaring themselves to be the Messias; deceiving many by their artful speeches and magical works. This prophecy is confirmed in the Acts of the Apostles and by the Jewish historian Josephus; for soon after the death of Christ a certain Theudas, a Jew from Egypt, appeared on the banks of the river Jordan, and even in Jerusalem itself, and gathered around him 4000 followers, whom he conducted into the desert; the son of the Galilean rebel Judas, known as Menahem, who, in the year 66, rose up against the king of Jerusalem. The best known among these impostors was Simon Magus, who gathered disciples about him in Judea and Rome, proclaiming himself to be the Word of God and the Promised One. Such were the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. But at the end of time, before the universal judgment, false Christs shall appear, who, by the inscrutable permission of Providence, shall, by the aid of Satan, perform most wonderful prodigies, so that even the elect shall be deceived. And yet all these impostors are but the forerunners of the most cursed one of all, Antichrist, of whom St. Paul

thus writes in his second epistle to the Thessalonians: "A revolt must first come," that is, a great and general falling away from God, "and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself, as if he were God. This wicked one the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming, him whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and all seduction of iniquity to them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Therefore, God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying" (*Thess. ii.*).

In the second place, there was to be, just before the fall of Jerusalem, much talk of conflicts and rebellions, and rumors of war; kingdom was to rise against kingdom, and nation against nation. All these things were verified to the letter, after the death of Christ. Everywhere the Gentiles rose up against the Jews dwelling in their countries and put them to death, as was the case in Alexandria, Cæsarea, Ptolemais, Tyre, and several other localities. Among themselves, now one Jewish state, and now another, rebelled against the Roman power, and during the thirty years preceding their final overthrow, there were continual warrings between the Jews and the Samaritans, Syrians and Romans. In much larger proportions, will similar occurrences precede the last judgment, as the prophet Azarias had foretold in the days of King Asa, 900 years before Christ: "Many days shall pass in Israel without the true God, and without a priest or teacher, and without the law. At that time there shall be no peace, but terrors on every side among all the inhabitants of the earth. For nation shall fight against nation, and city against city, for the Lord will trouble them with all distress" (*Paralipom. xv.*).

In the third place, our divine Lord foretold pestilence, famine, and earthquakes as about to come before the fall of Jerusalem. Pestilence and famine, as the ordinary consequences of all war, did follow closely in the wake of the wars mentioned above. And the Acts of the Apostles speak of a great famine having come upon the earth, in the time of Claudius, about twelve years after the death of Christ, and by which Palestine was especially afflicted. Moreover, we read of several earthquakes, especially in Asia Minor, during

the reigns of Claudius and Nero. Similar, but much more dreadful and widespread earthquakes, plagues, and famines will ravage the earth in the days preceding the last judgment. "Howl ye," exclaims the prophet Isaias, "for the day of the Lord is near, it shall come as a destruction from the Lord. Therefore shall all hands be faint and every heart of man shall melt, and shall be broken. Gripings and pains shall take hold of men, they shall be in pain as a woman in labor. Every one shall be amazed at his neighbor, for their countenances shall be as faces burnt. Behold the day of the Lord shall come, a cruel day and full of indignation and of wrath, to lay the land desolate and to destroy sinners."

In the fourth place, according to the prophetic words of Christ, there were to be signs in the heavens proclaiming the destruction of the Jewish capital. These words were verified; for we read in the above mentioned Josephus, himself a Jew, that a sword-shaped light was visible for a whole year in the sky above Jerusalem; and that on the feast of the Passover, just one year before the assault of the Roman army, a strange and very bright light surrounded the temple and the altar, making night as bright as day, and lasting six months. He also speaks of the rumbling of chariot-wheels, and the tramp of armies distinctly heard and seen in the air a few days before the breaking out of hostilities. As to the signs in the heavens previous to the general judgment, the prophet Ezekiel had already foretold in the inspired words: "I will move the heavens previous to the general judgment, the prophet Ezekiel day of wrath is come. And I will cover the heavens, and I will make the stars thereof dark: I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light."

Fifthly, our Saviour alludes to the frightful persecution to be directed against the Church previous to the city's overthrow. This prediction was really and sadly verified in blood. With diabolical hatred, Jews and Gentiles fell upon the messengers and adherents of the Crucified Jesus, and raging enemies and false friends, intrigue, violence, mockery, fire and sword were all engaged in compassing the destruction of Christianity. And only two years after the death of the cruel tyrant Nero, Jerusalem was in ruins. At the end of time, that is, in the days of Antichrist, the same violent hatred, so cruelly manifested toward the Church by the Jews and pagans of old, will be renewed with still greater fierceness and power.

Finally, Christ asserts that Jerusalem shall be destroyed, when "this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the nations of the earth." In other words, the new kingdom of God in Christ must first sink firmly its foundation among Jews, Romans, Greeks, and barbarians, before the sanctuary at Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins. And so it happened. For, even at that time, some seven or eight years before the fall of Jerusalem, St. Paul could declare, in his letter to the Colossians: "The truth of the gospel is come into the whole world, and bringeth forth fruit and groweth."

This prophecy refers also, of course, and in the more literal sense, to the last years of the world, when there will be no nation on the earth to which the gospel shall not have been preached.

4. THE PREDICTIONS RELATING TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Our divine Saviour, after having thus answered the inquiries of His apostles concerning the premonitory signs of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the last judgment, now proceeds to speak of the actual destruction of the doomed city.

"But when you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand. When, therefore, you shall see the abomination of desolation which was spoken by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, where it ought not to stand, he that readeth let him understand, then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains, and he who is in the city let him depart out of it, and those who are in the countries not enter into it. Let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter therein to take anything out of the house, and let him that shall be in the field not turn back to take his coat.

"For these are the days of vengeance that all things may be fulfilled that are written. But wo to them that are with child, and give suck in those days, for there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. They shall fall by the edge of the sword and shall be led away captive into all nations. Pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath; for in those days shall be such tribulations, distress in the land and wrath upon this people, such as were not from the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, neither shall be. And they shall fall by the edge

of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles: till the times of the nations be fulfilled. And unless the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect, he hath shortened the days. Then, if any man shall say to you: Lo, here is Christ; lo, He is here: do not believe. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and they shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Take ye heed, therefore: behold, I have foretold you all things. If, therefore, they shall say to you: Behold, he is in the desert, go ye not out: Behold, he is in the closet; believe it not: for, as lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even into the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together.''

The historians of the fall of Jerusalem bear testimony that those prophetic words of Christ were verified to the letter. During the siege, in the year 70, famine, pestilence, and the internal conflicts between different factions within the unfortunate city prevailed to such an extent, that nearly 600,000 dead bodies of the starved, slain, or victims of the plague, were thrown over the walls; while more than 500,000 came to their death either by the storming or other accidents of war, and 100,000 were sold publicly, part of whom were condemned to work for life in the mines, and the other part sent to Rome as food for the wild animals of the amphitheaters.

Our Saviour foretold not only the actual destruction of their city, but also the lasting and blighting curse, their perpetual banishment and subjection, which would pursue the Jews till the time appointed for their conversion. When, sixty years after their complete subjugation, the Jews again rose in rebellion against their Roman conquerors, over 500,000 were slain, and those who survived were permitted, by paying a fine, to visit the ruins of their once beautiful city, only once a year, for the purpose of giving vent to their grief in tears and groans. And so these people, thenceforth scattered over the earth, have continued to be constant objects of distrust and aversion, often of violent hatred.

And so the Jews are to-day strangers among the nations. Once they preferred a highway robber named Barabbas to Christ, and now behold the dreadful penalty of their choice; the fate of the highwayman is theirs, hunted down, compelled

to wander adrift along the highways of the nations, afraid to return to their home, bearing a felon's brand on their very features.

5. THE PREDICTIONS RELATING TO THE END OF THE WORLD.
THE LAST JUDGMENT

To the prophecy of the subversion of Jerusalem, our Saviour immediately adds a description of the destruction of the earth, though, of course, centuries are to intervene between the two events. According to the words of the Psalmist, a thousand years are but a day before the Lord, and the two events are so closely identified, that the chastisement sent upon Jerusalem and its people is a true and striking figure of divine chastisement on the last day.

“And immediately after the tribulation of those days, there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves: men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved.

“Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. And He shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them. But when these things begin to come to pass, look and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand.

“And He spoke to them a similitude: See the fig-tree, and all the trees. Of the fig-tree learn a parable. When the branch thereof is now tender and the leaves are come forth, when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh; so you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand, before the door. Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away. But of the day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father.

“Take heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the

time is. Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly.

“As the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For, as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came and took them all away, so also shall the coming of the Son of man be. Then two shall be in the field; one shall be taken and one shall be left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one shall be taken, and one shall be left.”

From this prophecy, according to which, the end of the world was to follow “immediately after the tribulation of those days,” that is, the destruction of Jerusalem, many concluded that this awful event, the destruction of the earth, would happen in a very few years. But as year succeeded year, and the prediction was not fulfilled, several malicious scoffers arose, even in the lifetime of St. Peter, and ridiculed the Christians, saying: “Where is the promise of His coming? for since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

But the prince of the apostles replied to these scoffers that “one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord delayeth not His promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up. But we, according to His promises, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which justice dwelleth” (2 *Peter*, iii.).

The ancient prophets often speak in the same manner of the Messiah, as He Himself does of the last judgment; that is, in the present tense, describing in their prophecies His coming, sufferings, and triumphs as almost present, and even sometimes as past, although away centuries in the future.

Our divine Saviour used this mode of expression intentionally, in order to stimulate His disciples and all of us to holy watchfulness and serious preparation, especially as the fate, which will meet us in that dreadful day, shall have been already decided at the hour of our death. To be sure, though

to us the day and the hour are unknown, both are well known to our Saviour, for He is the consubstantial Son of the omniscient Father. But He does not know them as sent by the Father, for as such He was commissioned to announce to us the truth of salvation, and not the day, nor the hour, of the judgment. If, then, our Father in heaven does not will that we should know beforehand the time of the last judgment, is it not unbecoming in us to seek this knowledge by undue curiosity? Would it not be much more profitable to await the day of the Lord in patient humility, and meanwhile, as the apostle advises, work out our salvation in fear and trembling?

As Jesus had already predicted, fearful signs shall take place in all creation, before the last judgment;—in the sun, moon, stars, on the surface of the earth. As creation was in the beginning beautifully developed in six days out of nothing, it shall gradually leave its grooves and return to the chaos whence it came. For man has abused sun, moon, stars, the sea, and all the elements by making them subservient to his evil passions; therefore they must be reduced to ruin, before the glorious new creation can take place. Who can describe the anguish of those who, but a short time previous to these signs, were living so unconcerned, so unbelieving, in their sins? We may form some idea of this mental anguish, by standing at the bedside of a dying and despairing sinner.

The sign of the cross will shine in celestial brilliancy before the Son of man, when He will come in all His splendid majesty to judge the world. Wo then to those who, in life, found the cross of Christ a folly and a stumbling-block.

The angels of heaven will accompany their King to His court of justice; and like the clangor of trumpets will their voices resound throughout creation. These are the angels whom the Lord, in His love for us, appointed as our guardians for body and soul. They, by the power of the omnipotent Creator, will summon from the grave the bodies of those whom they guarded in life, and take their stand beside them, to give testimony for or against, according as these mortals obeyed the angels' counsels in life or not. "And the sea," writes St. John in the book of the Apocalypse, "gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by these things which were

written in the books according to their works." And St. Paul writes instructively and plainly: "The Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first" (*Thessalonians* iv.); "Behold I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed" into glory. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 *Cor.* xv.).

And when the whole human family shall be assembled for judgment, the Lord of justice and sanctity will pronounce the sentence; separate forever the good from the bad, separate husband from wife, parents from children, friend from friend, companion from companion, in order thus to reward the good and to punish the bad for all eternity.

After the judgment, the new creation of heaven and earth shall be completed. For, as the human body really dies in death, only to rise again on the last day from dust and ashes to a new and glorified life, so will the universe on that day be destroyed by fire, to be restored by the omnipotent power of God to an existence of indescribable beauty and glory. For, King Solomon has said: "I have learned that all the works which God hath made, continue forever" (*Eccl.* iii. 14). And St. Gregory the Great thus explains these words of Solomon: "It is true that the works of God shall pass away from their present form, but in substance they shall last forever. The Lord will not create new existences, but will renew His present works, as the earth is renewed in springtime." Hence St. Augustine holds that at that time, "the glorified universe will correspond to the glorified state of the human body." This renewal of creation has been foretold by the prophet Isaias in these words: "For behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be in remembrance, and they shall not come upon the heart. But you shall be glad and rejoice forever in those days which I create" (*Is.* lxv.). It is to this prophecy that St. Peter alludes when he writes: "We, according to His promises, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which justice dwelleth" (2 *Pet.* iii.). And St. Jerome adds very appropriately: "St. Peter

does not say other heavens and another earth, but the old renewed and transformed into a glorified state." And yet these are all profound mysteries of faith which the human intellect is unable fully to fathom—mysteries in which proud science affects to discover but silly contradictions. The Christian soul, however, looks with unspeakable consolation and unbounded happiness into these mysteries, and in the midst of those sufferings and tribulations which life always brings with it, remembers that glory to which all are called who weep and are sorrowful here below, and who mourn and suffer persecution for justice' sake. And if, while enveloped in this body, many things appear obscure to the soul, it knows all our wisdom here below is imperfect and buries itself with reverence and worship in the contemplation of these glorious mysteries described by St. John in Revelations, as follows: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth was gone, and the sea is now no more. And I John saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people: and God Himself with them shall be their God: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne, said: Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me: Write, for these words are most faithful and true."

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS. OF THE FAITHFUL AND UN-FAITHFUL SERVANT. THE SENTENCE OF THE JUDGE. THE SEPARATION OF THE GOOD FROM THE BAD

(TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK)

Matt. xxiv 42; xxv. 46; Mark xiii. 33-37; Luke xxi. 34-38

ST. AUGUSTINE says: "In whatever condition thy last day of life shall find thee and thy death-hour overtake thee, in

that very same condition will the day of judgment find thee; for thou shalt be judged on the last day, as to how thou wast on thy dying day. If any one permit himself to be overtaken unawares by the hour of death, he shall be overtaken by all the terrors of the judgment-day. Therefore, let the Christian watch, that the day of the Lord may not find him unprepared."

Thus the general judgment and the death-hour of each individual are closely identified, and all the impressive warnings to watchfulness given by our Saviour to His disciples, are equally applicable to the last judgment and suitable to our death-moments.

1. WE MUST BE ALWAYS PREPARED

Therefore, "take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly. For as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face of the earth. Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man. Watch ye, because ye know not what hour your Lord will come. But this know ye, that if the good man of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Wherefore be you also ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come.

"Even as a man who, going into a far country, left his house and gave authority to his servants over every work and commanded the porter to watch. Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath appointed over his family to give them meat in season? Blessed is the servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing! Amen, I say to you, he shall place him over all his goods. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart: My Lord is long a-coming; and shall begin to strike his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with drunkards, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not, and at an hour that he knoweth not; and shall separate him, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Watch ye, therefore, for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock's crowing,

or at morning; lest, coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch."

The most deplorable and pernicious evil that the devil, in his cunning, can inflict upon man, is his strenuous effort to rob us of a calm and wholesome fear of death, and to lull us into a false and dangerous security. "To be sure," he whispers into our ear, "you will die, that is understood; but it will be a long time before death comes to you. You are yet so young, just in the prime of life; or, if you are getting on in years, you are still vigorous and full of vitality. Though age makes itself felt by loss of strength, or increasing infirmities, by dullness of hearing, or weakness of sight, you are yet sound of heart; or even if you are ailing and confined to your bed, you are not going to die so soon. Think how many, as old and as sick as you, have recovered and lived yet some years in the bosom of their family." Such is man's dream from childhood, through youth, manhood, old age; till suddenly and unexpectedly death comes like a thief in the night, and it is too late.

Remember well, this thief is lying in ambush, and even now, perhaps, very close by. And is your heart not yet well secured, nor firmly entrenched in a state of sanctifying grace? have you laid aside the sacred means of defense—prayer, daily examen of conscience, frequent reception of the sacraments? If so, then the thief will surprise you unprepared in your unguarded and exposed situation; he will rob you of all that you have gained by virtue of holy baptism, namely, a share in the atonement of Christ, membership in the Church, and your claim to eternal happiness.

2. THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Our divine Lord compares the relative conditions, and how it will be in the new kingdom of God with those that are careful and prepared and those who are giddy and indifferent, with the condition in which the five prudent and the five foolish virgins found themselves at a wedding-feast, when waiting for the bridegroom.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish and five wise: But the five foolish, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and

slept. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil: for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Now whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering, said: Amen I say to you, I know you not. Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour."

Like these ten virgins, we are all invited to the nuptials of the Lamb, in order to share a happy eternity. Like the virgins who, with the bride, were awaiting the bridegroom, in order to accompany them into the wedding-hall, we are waiting with the bride of Christ, His Church, for the coming of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ Himself, in order to go with Him, in the company of all the saints and elect, in happy train into the kingdom of heaven. Our lamps are in our hands; in holy baptism they were made to burn with infused grace of divine faith. But alas, with many the light of faith is dying out, or quite extinguished. They still repeat the Apostles' Creed, but from old habit or interested motives. But that glowing light of joyous, animated, interior fidelity to faith's truths has been long extinguished. How did this happen? St. James replies: "Faith without works is dead." As the lamps of the foolish virgins went out for want of oil, so does the light of faith die in our hearts, if not nourished by those good works corresponding to true faith; namely, piety, love of neighbor, and self-control. Let no one deceive himself by saying: I will hold fast the faith in my heart, but as for the practice of piety, mortification, moderation, mildness, and chastity, I will wait till I am older. That is deceiving ourselves. Without good works, without unceasing and earnest effort to obtain true holiness, your faith will wither, whether you wish it or not, to a useless, lifeless corpse. For, as we have the assurance in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, that without faith it is impossible to please God, that is, to obtain admittance to the heavenly wedding-banquet, equally true and unailing is the assurance of St. James the Apostle, that faith without works is dead, that is, it is impossible, without the practice of good works, to keep our faith alive. Hence, too,

we are warned by our Saviour, in His parable of the ten virgins, always to have the oil of good works in readiness, so that when He summons us to His judgment-seat, we may come into His presence with lamps flaming with a brilliant, God-pleasing faith. Otherwise, there will be an hour of bitterness before us, when all will be drear and dismal, with the door shut against us, and the dread assurance in our ears: "Verily, I know you not."

O remember the examples of the saints! When St. Lawrence Justinian lay upon his death-bed, he said, smiling: "Until this hour, all was child's play, but now comes the serious moment, for the bridegroom is approaching, and I must go forth to meet Him." Then, as he raised his eyes to heaven, his face beaming with heavenly light, and full of fervor, he cried out: "I am coming, sweetest Jesus. This day I have always kept before my mind; thou knowest it, O Lord." As he uttered these words, his soul went out to meet the long-desired Bridegroom.

3. THE PARABLE OF THE FAITHFUL AND THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS

"For even as a man going into a far country, called his servants, and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey. And he that had received the five talents, went his way, and traded with the same, and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received the two, gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money. But after a long time the lord of those servants came, and reckoned with them. And he that had received the five talents coming, brought other five talents, saying: Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the two talents came and said: Lord, thou deliveredst two talents to me: behold, I have gained other two. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. But he that had received the one talent, came and

said: Lord, I know that thou art a hard man; thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou hast not strewed: and being afraid I went, and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, here hast thou that which is thine. And his lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sow not, and gather where I have not strewed: thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it him that hath ten talents; for to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

A few days before his public entry into Jerusalem, Jesus had proposed to His disciples a similar parable, hinting at the infidelity of the Jews who would not acknowledge the dominion of the Messias, and who, therefore, fell a pray to the wrath of the returning lord of the vineyard. To-day, our divine Lord repeats this parable, but only with a view of inducing His disciples to take well to heart the necessity of a serious preparation for the coming day of judgment, by a judicious use of the talents entrusted to our charge. For the Lord has entrusted us with many and varied talents, gifts of the supernatural order, such as faith, hope, charity, and others; gifts of nature, such as intellect, mind, will, health, bodily strength, fortune, and the like; gifts of life, as father, mother, ruler, teacher, etc. It is very important that we often take account of these entrusted gifts, and keep it like an inventory before our eyes, not, indeed, to awaken our pride, for all that we have is but an alms from the hand of God. It behooves us also, not to envy others who have received more than we have, nor to despise those who have received less. In making His division, the Lord has acted in pursuance of the decrees of His adorable wisdom, love, and justice, and has given to every one what is most advantageous to him. Learn rather to thank God, and to renew again and again your promise to make faithful use of the talents entrusted to your keeping.

For a dreadful penalty is in store for the careless and indifferent servant, who will not be prepared, on His Master's return, to lay before Him the proceeds of the talent which he

has imprudently buried in the earth; buried either in the sands of sloth, by neglecting, through indolence or luxury, the duties of his state of life; buried in the swamp of pleasure-seeking, by employing it to procure the gratification of his lustful desires; buried in the hard clay of godlessness, by using it for undermining religion, or in persecuting the Church of Christ. Wo to such a servant! Whilst his fellow-servants will obtain the kingdom of heaven in reward for their fidelity, he will be cast into outer darkness. How sad and terrible the separation! Our divine Master furnishes us with a thrilling description of this dreadful separation in the following words:

4. THE SENTENCE OF THE JUDGE IN FAVOR OF THE JUST

“And when the Son of man shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty: and all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left. Then shall the king say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came to Me. Then shall the just answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee: thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in: or naked, and covered Thee? Or when did we see Thee sick or in prison, and came to Thee? And the king answering, shall say to them: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.”

You perceive here that it is only a living faith, a fruit-bearing, practical-in-charity faith, that can make us happy. Among these fruits of a holy, practical faith, our Lord mentions the six corporal works of mercy. The seventh is mentioned in the book of Ecclesiasticus (Jesus Sirach) with the words: “My son, shed tears over the dead, and according to judgment cover his body, and neglect not his burial.” Moreover, the Holy Scriptures, in various passages, inculcate the duty of practising the seven spiritual works of mercy, namely,

to admonish sinners, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the afflicted, to forgive offenses, to bear with the troublesome, to pray for the living and the dead.

From the following words, uttered by our divine Saviour Himself, we may form some idea of the dreadful fate in store on the last day for such as neglect these admonitions to the exercise of mercy :

5. THE SENTENCE OF THE JUDGE AGAINST THE WICKED

“Then the King shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me not in: naked, and you covered Me not: sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they also shall answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to Thee? Then He shall answer them, saying: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just, into life everlasting.”

Certainly this is an awful sentence to fall from divine lips upon an unhappy mortal's ears. “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.” An awful sentence, but a well-merited one for the hard-hearted and unmerciful. God is infinite, eternal love. How, then, could He welcome into the heavenly kingdom those persons who have stifled in their hearts all sentiments of charity toward their fellow-beings, and who have been interested only in themselves and in the gratification of their own selfish desires? On earth there was no sympathy between them and God; how, then, can there be anything in common between them beyond the grave? The devil is the spirit of hatred, “a murderer from the beginning,” and he revels in man's misfortune. To him belong the hard-hearted as children to their father, by right of progenitorship; hence their abode will be during all eternity with the devil and his angels, in the flames that are never extinguished.

“And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple: but at night going out, He abode in the mount that is called Olivet.¹ And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the temple to hear Him.”

¹That is to say, in the village of Bethania, near Mount Olivet.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JEWS LAY PLANS TO PUT JESUS TO DEATH. JUDAS ISCARIOT OFFERS TO DELIVER HIS LORD AND MASTER INTO THEIR HANDS

(WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK)

Matt. xxvi. 1-16; Mark xiv. 1-11; Luke xxii. 1-6

SPY WEDNESDAY presents to our view two harrowing pictures of avarice, treachery, cunning, and disloyalty in the heart of a chosen apostle; of obduracy, diabolical hatred, and an insatiable thirst for blood in the council-hall of those seventy-two men, who, by their office of high-council, stood at the head of the chosen people of God. And yet this same day, according to ancient tradition, presents to us, apart from the contemplation of human degradation and ingratitude, another picture truly touching and consoling—the picture of Jesus parting from His blessed Mother.

1. THE MEMBERS OF THE HIGH COUNCIL RESOLVE TO TAKE JESUS BY SUBTILTY

“Now the feast of unleavened bread which is called the Pasch, was at hand. And it came to pass that when Jesus had ended all these words, He said to His disciples: You know that after two days shall be the Pasch, and the Son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified.

“Then were gathered together the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people into the court of the high-priest who is called Caiphas: and they consulted together, that, by subtilty, they might apprehend Jesus and put Him to death. But they feared the people, and they said: Not on the festival day, lest perhaps there should be a tumult among the people.”

About 2000 years earlier in the world's history, a very similar meeting was held, not in a stately legislative chamber, but in a rude field and beneath the canopy of the heavens. It was the council held by Jacob's sons against their unsuspecting brother Joseph, the prototype of Jesus. Alas, all the greed for money and for blood of those fathers of the Jewish nation, is again awakened after the long lapse of 2000 years, in the hearts of their descendants, and causes them to stretch forth the evil hand, as their fathers did of yore against the saintly

and innocent, to-day against the Author Himself of saintliness, the world's Redeemer. Now, indeed, is verified the prediction of the royal Psalmist: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against His Christ."

The princes of the Jewish people, that is, the high-priests, scribes and elders, assembled for the purpose of now making themselves the instruments of satan, by consulting and planning together how to apprehend Jesus and put Him to death. They must apprehend Him by *subtlety*, for these men knew full well that an open, honorable, truthful, and just judicial proceeding would not secure their dishonorable purpose. They must employ *subtlety*, for all their previous duplicity, entangling questions, and appeals to popular prejudice, having proved fruitless, they must needs resort to a deeper and more effective artifice in order to destroy the Redeemer. Yes, by *subtlety*; for they must frighten the masses of the people, upon whom the Saviour's holiness, wise teachings, compassionate love for the poor and suffering, and countless wonderful miracles, have made a deep impression. But the *subtle* and unscrupulous conspirators were well aware of the proverbial fickleness of a multitude, and how, when led by a band of bold and influential men, they will blindly applaud and sanction a sudden and bold proceeding. It was necessary, therefore, to make a sudden and bold movement against Jesus, in order to take the people by surprise, throw them off their guard, and then, by a well-directed excitement, to carry them along with themselves.

These arbitrary measures could not, however, be taken openly, nor in the light of day, and especially must not be ventured on the ensuing great Sabbath or passover.¹ For, on this festival, there would be among the great concourse of strangers in Jerusalem, a large number of persons from Galilee and other parts, to whom Jesus had done great favors in restoring them to bodily health, and who would certainly look upon any indignity offered to his much-respected person with very positive and perhaps dangerous disfavor, and might possibly make a successful effort to prevent His arrest. But if His capture were once an accomplished fact, if the numerous minions of the high-priests and a crowd of the lowest rabble, who could be bought up at a low figure, were once enlisted in the success of the undertaking; if the people actually saw their

¹"For that was a great sabbath day" [John, xix, 31].

much praised wonder-worker within the grasp of the law, bound hand and foot like a criminal, dragged helplessly before the bench of justice, then, as the ringleaders fondly hoped, no one would have the courage to interfere in His behalf. In fact, many who had been loudest in His praises would be the first to range themselves on the side of the successful legal authorities, and even to assist them in carrying out their nefarious designs, while the rest would be intimidated and silenced by the influence of the Pharisees, the violence of the mob, or through human respect. The only thing now left was to fix upon an hour in which to apprehend their victim. This question was under debate, and seemed unlikely to be settled, when the great difficulty was solved in a most unexpected way; solved to their utmost satisfaction by an apostle of Christ, by the wretched and accursed Judas.

2. JUDAS VOLUNTEERS TO BETRAY HIS MASTER

“Satan entered into Judas, who was surnamed Iscariot, one of the twelve.” And he “went away and discoursed with the chief-priests and magistrates that he might betray Jesus to them. Who, hearing it, were glad. And he said to them: What will you give me, and I will deliver Him up to you? They promised him they would give him money, and they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought for an opportunity to betray Him in the absence of the multitude.”

From the lofty dignity of an apostle to the degraded condition of a traitor the fall is very great. It was occasioned in this instance by avarice. Judas had been a witness of the voluntary poverty of his Master, from whose lips he had heard many touching exhortations to independence of mind and to contempt for earthly goods. But his heart, instead of acceding to these admonitions, grew harder from day to day, verifying the words of his Master: “You can not serve God and mammon.” The divine virtue of faith gradually died out in a soul clouded by avarice, and indeed, even a year before he betrayed his Master, Judas had fallen inwardly and secretly away from Him, as we may easily infer by reading the sixth chapter of St. John’s gospel. For he was among those Jews who murmured against the promise made by our Lord concerning the blessed sacrament of His body and blood. Our Lord said at the time: “But there are some of you that believe not;” and these words, as the evangelists show us, in



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the following verse, must have been meant for Judas: "For Jesus knew from the beginning who he was that would betray Him." And again, when Peter made his noble profession of faith, saying: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," Jesus replied: "Have I not chosen you twelve: and one of you is a devil?" It is evident from all this, that the fall of the unhappy apostle began with a loss of faith, and indeed, with his unbelieving rejection of the doctrine of the real presence. The self-seeking and avaricious soul of Judas was incapable of appreciating the love and magnanimity of Christ in wishing to leave to His followers the treasure of His own divine person. Only four days before making his detestable plot with the high-priest against Jesus, he objected fretfully to the generosity of the noble-hearted penitent Mary Magdalen, when pouring a quantity of precious ointment on the feet of her Saviour, and demanded with temper: Wherefore this waste? So it has come to this at last, Judas, that thou grudgest to thy divine Master the homage of a loving soul, deemest the Son of the living God undeserving this poor honor, hatest Him in thy heart, and pantest to desert Him and His cause? Yes, from that moment his contempt for Jesus grew into a genuine diabolical hatred, and as the evangelist remarks, "He sought for an opportunity to betray Him."

But we ask, why did Jesus, who foresaw this man's dreadful fall, yet select him for an apostle? In answer to this question, we must remember and believe firmly above all things, that it was not his call to the apostolate, but his own voluntary free-will malice which led to his ruin. Even the other apostles at the time of their calling to the apostleship had in their hearts many an ill-suppressed, inordinate tendency, but as they opened up their souls with docility to the exhortations, example, and grace of Jesus Christ, they were cured of their spiritual infirmities. Judas received these same exhortations; he witnessed the same sublime example of the divine Master, the same graces were at his disposal; it was therefore the traitor's own fault, exclusively his own unpardonable fault, if he chose the way of perdition. And if the Redeemer, notwithstanding that He foresaw it from all eternity, permitted this self-sought perdition, it was because, in His wisdom and mercy, He had resolved to draw from the deplorable deed the richest blessings for the redemption and sanctification of the human race.

In the first place, Christ desired, by permitting Himself to be betrayed and sold by His own disciple, to render satisfaction to His heavenly Father for the treason to Himself of which mankind had been guilty through the commission of sin. For did not our first parents betray and sell their Lord and God in a similar way to the evil serpent, for a very trifle, the momentary enjoyment of forbidden fruit? And have not their descendants renewed and continued this contemptible treason down to the present day, by turning away from their God, to enjoy inordinately transient goods and forbidden pleasures? Secondly, Christ wished, by permitting Himself to be sold to sinners, to reveal and prove to us in the most decided and effectual and touching manner, His infinite love for sinners; that He had come down to earth for the sake of sinners, to be their willing slave, and a victim for their redemption. Thirdly, He wished, by the example of what He Himself suffered, to comfort and encourage His holy Church which would, in the course of centuries, be so often betrayed by her own children, as well as to soothe and alleviate the bitter affliction of those who are betrayed by their friends, or even by their own children. Fourthly, our amiable Redeemer, who, for three long years, had, in His patience and forbearance, tolerated the faithless disciple at His side, and even bestowed many favors upon Him, wished to teach us that we too must be forbearing toward wicked, hostile men, and give them good for evil. Finally, He wished, by the treason of Judas, to impress us with a sense and knowledge of the uncertainty of human friendship.

Thus we see that divine mercy knew how to extract from the evil deed of one man rich blessings for the whole Church and for all the children of God. Judas, the Cain of the New Testament, sells the innocent blood of the Abel of the New Testament, Jesus Christ, which blood cries to heaven for grace and mercy on the whole human race, and it flows over the earth and sinks into its bosom, washing away the ancient curse. As that Judas of the Old Testament, the fourth-born son of Jacob, by selling his innocent brother Joseph to the Ismaelite traders for twenty pieces of silver, prepared the way unwittingly and unintentionally for the prosperity of Joseph and for the future salvation of the Jews and Gentiles of Egypt, so, while the Judas of the New Testament is selling his God-man brother, Jesus Christ, for thirty pieces of silver, and is in the act of receiving the price of innocent blood, the

betrayed Jesus begins the redemption of men and is preparing to enter into His glory: "When, therefore," Judas "was gone out, Jesus said: Now is the Son of man glorified." Thirty pieces of silver! "And they weighed for my wages thirty pieces of silver" (*Zach. xi. 12*), the prophecy pronounced by Zacharias centuries before is now fulfilled. Thirty pieces of silver! The price, in olden times, of a slave, as written in the twenty-first chapter of the second book of Moses, he who occasions the death of a slave shall give thirty pieces of silver to compensate his owner. The divine King of heaven and earth chose to be sold for thirty pieces of silver in order to prove that He had really assumed the position of a servant.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST SUPPER

(HOLY THURSDAY)

Matt. xxvi. 17-30; Mark xiv. 12-26; Luke xxii. 7-39; John xiii. 1-14, 31

1. HOW THE CHURCH OBSERVES HOLY THURSDAY

SIGNIFICANT and solemn rites are performed by the Church on Thursday of Holy Week.¹

At first sight, these ceremonies seem to contradict each other, for they are expressive partly of joy, partly of sadness. Yet this mingling of joy and grief is right and proper; for the different events commemorated are both joyous and sad. The chalice of benediction, of happiness and of life, stands at the foot of the death-laden crucifix. On one hand is the institution of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, with its introductory and symbolical ceremonies—the eating of the paschal lamb and the washing by Jesus of the disciples' feet. On the other hand we see the agony of our Saviour in the garden of Olives, the vile and traitorous kiss of unhappy Judas, and the rude and violent capture of the Son of God, by His merciless enemies.

¹Holy Thursday, or, as it is sometimes called, Maunday Thursday, is known in some lands as Green Thursday, in memory of the wild lettuce prescribed by law to be eaten on this day with the paschal lamb. The practice of using on this day, for the first time in the season, the early vegetables of spring, in remembrance of this command of the Old Testament, is now almost forgotten, though it was religiously observed by our ancestors.

On this day, only one mass is celebrated in each cathedral or parish church. During this mass, the celebrant administers holy communion under one form only, namely, that of bread, to the other clergy and to the laity, in commemoration of the Saviour's administering, for the first time, the newly ordained sacrament to His apostles at the last supper. The white color of the priest's vestments, the temporary decoration of the high altar, and the chanting of the joyous *Gloria in excelsis* during which all the bells are rung, tend to remind us of the glad-some meaning, and to revive the happy recollection, of the day on which Christ bequeathed to us His precious legacy of the Blessed Eucharist.

The doleful sounding of a wooden clapper during the canon of the mass, a sound which then replaces the more joyous tones of the bells, and is continued until the *Gloria* in the mass of Easter Saturday, as well as most of the other subsequent ceremonies and observances, are solemnly expressive of the sadness of the Church on this day. They also signify the vivid recollection in the minds of her children of the great sufferings undergone on this same day upward of 1800 years ago by her divine Founder in Jerusalem. The kiss of peace, usually given after the *Agnus Dei* in solemn masses, is omitted to-day out of a feeling of horror for the false kiss given by Judas to his Master. For the same reason it was customary in early times to omit the kissing of the altar and even of the gospel.

On this day, the bishops, during the solemn mass which they celebrate in their respective cathedrals, consecrate the holy oils which are to be used in the various parishes of their dioceses during the ensuing year. The Church gives two special reasons for selecting Holy Thursday for the consecration of the holy oils. In the first place, the blessed sacrament of the Eucharist, the institution of which is commemorated on this day, is the first and the very center of all the other sacraments, rites, and blessings, in the administration of which these oils are used. In the second place, the Church requires that only these newly consecrated oils,¹ to the exclusion of all others, be used on the following Holy Saturday in the bless-

¹The Church uses the oil of catechumens at the blessing of fonts, in the administration of baptism, at the consecration of altars, in the ordination of priests, and the coronation of kings and queens. The oil of the sick is used in Extreme Unction and at the blessing of bells. Holy chrism is used at baptism and confirmation, and in the consecration of bishops, of chalices, and even at the blessing of bells.

ing of the fonts and in the solemn baptism of catechumens.

At the end of the mass, the Blessed Sacrament is carried in solemn procession from the high altar to a chapel prepared in another part of the church, and which is termed the Repository. Here it remains enclosed in a tabernacle surrounded by lights and flowers, till the following day. Meanwhile the faithful come to adore and to make acts of reparation to our hidden Lord. This Holy Thursday procession is at once affecting and significant; for it brings vividly to our minds that sad and solemn vesper-procession made by our Saviour, with His wondering disciples, from the room of the last supper to the scene of His agony in the garden of Olives.

Next follows the dreary ceremony of the stripping of the altars by the priests, who, at the same time, slowly recite in mournful cadence and with subdued voice the words of the twenty-first Psalm: "O God, my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me? I am the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. Tribulation is very near, for there is none to help me. They have dug my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones. They have parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they have cast lots," etc. These words of the Psalmist express plainly and beautifully what is meant to be conveyed to the soul of the Christian, by the stripping of the altars on this day; namely, the deep humiliation of our suffering Redeemer, who chose to appear, to the eyes of men, destitute of all divine beauty and majesty. It symbolizes His abandonment by God and man, His nakedness after having been despoiled by His enemies, and finally, it symbolizes the unspeakable sadness of the Church herself, and her grief for the sufferings and death of her divine Spouse.

Finally the ceremony of washing the feet takes place in many cathedrals, in memory and in imitation of the wonderful humility of our Saviour, who washed the feet of His apostles on this night.

2. THE PREPARATION FOR THE PASSEVER. THE PASCHAL LAMB

Such are the solemn ceremonies and pious usages employed by the Church from remote antiquity, in order to remind her children of the important events and circumstances which transpired on the first Holy Thursday. The principal of these events was, of course, the last supper, or the old-law

celebration of the paschal lamb, observed for the last time by our blessed Lord, on the evening before His passion and death, with His disciples, in an upper room. This momentous event in the life of Jesus Christ is thus described by the evangelists:

“And on the first day of the Azymes or unleavened bread, on which it was necessary that the Pasch should be killed, the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Whither wilt thou that we go and prepare for thee to eat the Pasch? And He sendeth Peter and John, saying: Go and prepare for us the Pasch, that we may eat. But they said: Where wilt Thou that we prepare? And He said to them: Go ye into the city, and behold at your entering into it, a man shall meet you carrying a pitcher of water: follow him to the house which he goeth into. And wherever he shall enter, say to the good man of the house: The Master saith to thee, My time is near at hand; with thee I make the Pasch with My disciples: where is a refectory or guest-chamber, where I may eat the Pasch with My disciples? And he will show you a large dining-room furnished, and there prepare ye for us.

“And His disciples went their way and came into the city, and they found as He had told them, and they prepared the Pasch as Jesus appointed to them.

“And when evening was come, before the festival-day of the Pasch, Jesus knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end. And He came with the twelve.

“And when the hour was come, He sat down and placed Himself at table, and the twelve apostles with Him.

“And He said to them: With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer. For I say to you, that from this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Jesus having taken the chalice, gave thanks and said: Take and divide it among you. For I say to you, that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine till the kingdom of God come, when I shall drink it new in the kingdom of God, My Father.”

According to ancient tradition, the house in which our blessed Lord celebrated the last supper and established the Blessed Sacrament, belonged to St. Mark, whose family at that time were warm friends and admirers of Christ. It was in this same room that the apostles were assembled after their

divine Master's death; and here, too, He appeared to them on the evening of His resurrection. Here He instituted the great sacrament of penance; here, on Whit-Sunday, the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles; and here, too, it was, that St. Peter came on the night when he had been set free from prison by angels.¹

With reverent look, turn your eyes upon the venerable figure of our blessed Lord and Saviour seated in the midst of His apostles, His heavenly countenance beaming with supreme majesty of expression mingled with ineffable condescension and love for man. He is about to suppress forever the most sublime figure of the old dispensation, and to replace it by the most glorious of all the mysteries of the new law. With what yearning love He has waited the coming of this momentous hour! How intense must have been the throbbings of His divine-human heart, as, in the course of the meal, He looked upon the paschal lamb lying before Him with no bone of its body broken, and recognized in that inanimate article of food and of strength for man, the time-honored symbol of Himself. As this innocent lamb had been slain in accordance with the law, without injury to any bone, so on the following day was He, the Son of man, to be slain; though His bones, according to divine decree, were not to be broken. As at the time of the Israelites' departure from Egypt, the blood of the lamb was the safeguard of their first born against an untimely death, so now was the blood of the God-man to be a saving sign of the redemption and salvation of all the children of men. This is the last time that He will eat of the paschal lamb, for now the very truth and reality, that is, the passover feast of the New Testament, is about to come forth and supplant the ancient figure, and to take its place for all time in God's kingdom on earth, namely, the true Church of Christ. He takes the chalice, too, for the last time, and as was customary at this feast, He passes it around among His disciples, for the day is at hand on which, after the perfect completion and development of His kingdom on earth, He will drink, with all the elect, the mysterious wine of eternal happiness in heaven. Yet this chalice was not the mysterious cup of the ever Blessed Sacrament; this cup was not to be blessed and partaken of till after the meal and the washing of the feet.

¹"And Peter considering, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark, where many were gathered together and praying" [Acts xii. 12].

3. THE WASHING OF FEET

“And when supper was done, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and goeth to God, Jesus riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments, and having taken a towel, girded Himself. After that He putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. He cometh, therefore, to Simon Peter. And Peter saith to Him: Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered, and said to him: What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith to Him: Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him: If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me. Simon Peter saith to Him: Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him: He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all. For He knew who he was that would betray Him: therefore He said: You are not all clean.”

“Then after He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, being set down again, He said to them: Know you what I have done to you? You call Me Master, and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.”

Surely this is a spectacle on which even the angels might look down with astonishment and admiration. St. John, in relating this ceremony, is not able to find words to adequately express this manifestation of Christ's unbounded humility and excessive patience. He therefore contents himself with alluding, in the opening of his narration, to the statement, “The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Him;” as if he said, Although Jesus well knew that one of His apostles had sold Him, and was now only awaiting an opportunity to hand Him over to His enemies, yet He condescends to wash their feet, and even the feet of the traitor himself. Oh, astounding forbearance, over-indulgent love of our blessed Redeemer! “Knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God and goeth to God,” that is, as if the evangelist had said: Although the beloved Master was fully aware of His own

divine glory and infinite majesty, yet He was pleased to discharge the duty of a slave, in favor of His unworthy servants, by washing their feet. O incomprehensible humility and condescension of the Son of God!

And yet it must be so. The Teacher is about to take His departure, and hence He repeats once more practically to His apostles, by a most affecting ceremony, the truth which He had during the past three years explained, commanded, and inculcated, namely, the fundamental law of Christian humility, meekness, of self-abasement, and untiring love. Such was the object of Jesus in the washing of the feet. But He had also another object in view. He wished, by cleansing the apostles corporeally, to purify them from all traces of sin, and thus prepare them for the approaching reception of the Blessed Sacrament; as well also to signify to the faithful of all future time that those only should presume to approach this mysterious and grace-giving banquet, who had first cleansed their souls from mortal sin in the purifying waters of penance.

Behold, Christian reader, and lay well to heart the humility of the King of everlasting glory, as He makes Himself the servant of His apostles, even going down before them on His knees. Laying aside the ample brown garment which He usually wore over His seamless robe, and girding Himself with a linen towel, He begins, with St. Peter, the impressive operation of washing His disciples' feet. He was that highly privileged one—he to whom “not flesh and blood, but the heavenly Father had revealed that Christ is the Son of the living God.”

This clear and exalted knowledge of the divinity of Christ, imparted to Peter in this special manner, was incomparably superior to the knowledge that we possess through ordinary faith. Hence the humble man was frightened when he saw his Lord and God kneeling before him and preparing to wash his feet. He therefore exclaimed in amazement: “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet!” Thou, the Son of the living God, the Lord of heaven and earth, to wash My feet, who am but a worm of the earth, to become my servant! “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Our humble Saviour persists with friendly and impressive earnestness, saying: “What I do, thou knowest not now,” for there is a double mystery concealed in this washing of thy feet—the mystery of Christian self-abasement and the mystery of the proper preparation for the reception

of the sacrament of the Eucharist. It was necessary to impress this twofold meaning deeply in the hearts of the apostles, by means of this significant act of the feet-washing; and hence our Lord insists with much earnestness that they must undergo the operation; threatening even, that if they do not submit to His will, He will not permit them to receive worthily and profitably the mysterious bread which He had promised: "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me." Words full of meaning, which every Christian about to receive communion should ponder carefully. For, if you approach the Lord's table without being first washed from grievous sin through Christ, you may indeed receive the consecrated Bread of Life, yet you will have no share in the riches of divine grace, but will rather rush headlong to spiritual death.

At that time, Peter did not understand these words in all their full and mysterious meaning. He heard simply that, without this washing, he would have no part in Christ. Hence he exclaims, with all the eagerness of a soul glowing with intense faith: "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head," that is, I wish not only to have part with Thee, but the most abundant, most complete, and closest union with Thee. I wish to have part with Thee, not only by a general communion and interchange of love, but also by the most intimate and sacred relations possible.

In order to understand the answer of our Lord, we must remember that, among the Jews, it was customary for all invited guests to bathe before coming to a banquet, and just before going to table to wash their feet, even in the house of their host, in order not to soil the cushions on which, according to the fashion of those days, they used to recline when at table. It is to this custom that Jesus alludes in His reply to St. Peter: "He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet."

St. Peter then sat down and permitted Jesus to wash his feet. But who can conceive the feelings of embarrassment under which he labored? As he looked down and saw his Lord and Master on bended knees and with bowed head, tears flowed from his eyes and coursed rapidly down his cheeks. When Jesus, after having carefully dried Peter's feet with the towel, bent still lower and impressed a kiss upon them with His sacred lips, St. Peter's heart was ready to burst with excessive love, and he would at that moment have shed every

drop of his blood, if necessary, for the sake of his beloved Redeemer.

Having finished with St. Peter, our Lord then proceeded to render the same service to St. John, then to St. Andrew, St. James, and so on through all to the last. By this washing, these privileged men were cleansed not only in body, but also purified in soul. For then was infused into their inner being such a true and vivid knowledge of their unworthiness, and such a heartfelt contrition for their past sins, that these sentiments of perfect contrition were enough to obtain forgiveness. He also infused into them an inward light, by means of which they were enabled to understand clearly, and appreciate fully, their Saviour's infinite love and humility, as well as their own unworthiness to receive such an honor at His divine hands.

4. THE INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

But now that mystery of love, which from the beginning had lain in the sacred heart of Jesus, is to be accomplished and made manifest in the institution of the adorable sacrament of His own precious body and blood. Here human language fails. The words of the wisest and holiest may not, for they can not, express the exalted glory of this event in the life of Christ. So awfully grand and incomprehensible is this mystery that even the evangelists themselves recount it in the fewest words possible. If any place, it is here that St. John's words are true, "There are also many other things which Jesus did" and said in presence of His disciples, "that are not written in this book." Hence many of the most profoundly learned men and those most experienced in the ways of God, are of opinion that the divine Teacher, after having finished the washing of His apostles' feet, and before proceeding to the solemn institution of the Eucharist, prepared them in the best manner that they were capable of receiving, and said to them, that the hour had now come when He would redeem His promise and give them really and actually the heavenly manna. But, first of all, let us listen to the inspired words of the evangelists.

"While they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and He gave thanks, and He blessed it, and He broke it and gave it to His disciples, and said: Take ye and eat. *This is My body*, which is given for you: do this for a commemoration of Me.

"In like manner, taking the chalice after He had supped,

He gave thanks and gave it to them, saying: Drink ye all of this, for this *is My blood* of the New Testament which shall be shed for many to the remission of sins."

St. Paul, twenty-four years subsequent to this event, relates it and gives testimony of it in the first epistle to the Corinthians as follows:

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye and eat: this is My body which shall be delivered for you: do this for a commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in My blood; this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice: you shall show the death of the Lord until He come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and of the Blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself; not discerning the body of the Lord."

The same Apostle Paul in other epistles, both to the Corinthians and the Hebrews, writes to the same effect, saying positively: "We have an altar, whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle" (*Heb.* xiii. 10); "For the chalice of benediction, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (*1 Cor.* x. 16.)

Thus was fulfilled and perfected at the Last Supper, all that our blessed Saviour had so graciously and so emphatically promised during the celebration of the passover feast, just one year previous. After having given thanks to His heavenly Father, and having blessed the earthly gifts of bread and wine and offered them to the Father, He then, by virtue of His efficacious and omnipotent word, changed the bread and wine really, truly, and substantially into His Sacred Body and most Precious Blood. Then, presenting to His apostles this Body and this Blood, they received, ate, and drank; and thus was solemnized the first communion in the Church. Now, too, was offered for the first time that one, holy, mysterious sacrifice of the new covenant, foretold by the prophet Malachias. For, under the form of the bread, the body of Christ, in so far as

it was to be delivered up, that is to say, a body already sacrificed, was really present. Under the form of wine, the blood of Christ in so far as it was to be shed, namely, a blood of sacrifice, was really present. It was at this time, too, that the apostles and their successors received full power to offer up this self-same sacrifice of the new law. For Jesus permitted, or rather commanded them to perform those three acts, namely, of sacrifice, of consecration or complete change of one substance into another, and of communion; as He Himself had done. He enjoined them, saying: "Do this in commemoration of Me."

Who can describe the pious reverence, the profound humility, the ardent love, with which these highly favored apostles prepared to partake, for the first time, of this sacred and supernatural bread of celestial life? Well might they fall down upon their knees before their divine Master. Well might they clasp their hands, bow their heads, and shed copious tears, as one after the other received the bread of angels from the omnipotent hand of their blessed Lord. Well might they all, but most of all, the beloved disciple St. John, who had enjoyed the honor of resting His head upon His Master's bosom during the Last Supper, well might they, one and all, while enraptured in holy ecstasy, have believed that they were enjoying a foretaste of that celestial happiness which had been so often promised to them by their Saviour. O beloved, happy, venerated first followers of Jesus, you whose ineffable privilege it was to be the first among your fellow-men, to taste the sweet bread of angels, pray for me each time that I draw near to the table of the Lord! Pray that my heart may overflow with sentiments such as animated your pure, seraphic hearts, when you knelt before Jesus. Sublime sacrament of my Saviour's love! may I honor, adore, and love Thee at every moment of my life, at each drawing of my breath, at each pulsation of my heart. May I ever long for Thee, from the inmost depths of my soul. Bread of angels, strengthen me! Sacred food, nourish and satiate me! Saving medicine, heal me! Precious balsam, soothe me! Burning love, warm me! Bright sun, enlighten me! Rare treasure, enrich me! Supreme good, fill and fortify my heart now and forever! Amen.

The sublime value and glorious excellence of this holy sacrament will be made even still more conspicuous and striking to our understandings and touching to our hearts, if we

consider, even briefly, why Jesus ordained it on the very eve of His bitter passion and cruel death, and after having partaken of the paschal lamb. He wished to leave this sacrament to us as His farewell blessing, as a loving father's parting gift, as the completion of His goodness to us, as the crowning act of all His deeds of love.

Alas, how much to be pitied are those misguided heretics who affect to believe that the Son of God, in His last hours of life, hath left naught else to His cherished and beloved disciples and friends, but a little insignificant bread and wine, in mere remembrance of Him! Bread and wine in commemoration of the Son of God! Most absurd of heresies! "This is My body," saith Christ, and "this is My blood."

In this last solemn hour of the Saviour's life upon earth, He desired to leave to His beloved ones the most sublime and excellent of gifts—His own precious body and blood—though He left it under the forms and appearances of the two most familiar articles of food. He chose for this sovereign bequest, the most impressive moment of His life—just previous to His departure for His passion and death—that thus the memory of the dear departed One might be vividly and permanently engraved on the hearts and souls of those who love Him. For the last acts and the last words of our dying friends always impress themselves deeply on our minds. The hour was drawing near when, in His human form, He was about to leave His apostles; therefore, He chose this time to establish the adorable mystery of the Eucharist, in which He was to remain with them in the sacramental forms. He chose, too, the time when the apostles were just after having partaken of the paschal lamb. For the symbol was about to give place to the reality. The veritable Lamb of God who, by His precious blood, was to efface the sins of the world, was to replace the figurative lamb of the old law, the sprinkling of whose blood had saved from death and destruction the first-born of the ancient Israelites. The symbolic paschal feast of the Old Testament was to be soon followed by the eucharistic banquet of Christianity, of the eternal covenant of the new law.

5. JESUS FORETELLS THE TREASON OF JUDAS

How the perception of this great truth and reality must have filled the hearts of the astonished disciples with sublime happiness! What deep gratitude toward their divine Master

must have taken possession of their souls! Their hearts and intellects were ravished at the thought of the invaluable treasure which was henceforth to be theirs. With rapture they listened to each word as it fell from the Saviour's inspired lips. One, only one—alas! that there should be even one in the midst of this hallowed company—was unworthy. Judas felt no joy, nor peace, for his heart was filled with rancor and his soul was void of faith. The yawning gulf, already existing between him and Jesus, had now been frightfully widened by the sacrilege of an unholy communion. Referring to this incorrigible sinner, the divine Master now spoke in solemn and serious tones: "Amen, amen, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither is the apostle greater than He that sent him. If ye know these things, blessed shall ye be if ye do them. I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with Me, shall lift up his heel against Me. I tell you now before it come to pass, that when it shall come to pass ye may believe that I am He. Amen, I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me: and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me.

"When Jesus had said these things, they were at table, eating, and He was troubled in spirit; and He testified and said! Amen, amen I say unto you: Behold the hand of Him who betrayeth Me is with Me on the table: one of you that eateth with Me shall betray Me. The disciples, therefore, looked upon one another, doubting of whom He spoke. And they being very much troubled, began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing, and there was a strife amongst them. They began every one to say: Is it I, Lord? But He answering, said: One of the twelve, that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, he shall betray Me. The Son of man indeed goeth according to that which is determined, as it is written of Him, but wo to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed. It were better for him, if that man had not been born.

"And Judas that betrayed Him, answering, said: Is it I, Rabbi? He saith to him: Thou hast said it.

"Now there was at table, leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of His disciples whom He loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to the disciple, and said to him: Who is it of whom He speaketh? He therefore, leaning on the breast of Jesus, saith to Him: Lord, who is it? Jesus answered: He it is to whom I

shall reach bread dipped. And when He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the morsel, satan entered into Judas. And Jesus said to him: That which thou dost, do quickly. Now, no man at the table knew to what purpose He said this unto him. For some thought, because Judas had the purse, that Jesus had said to him: Buy those things which we have need of for the festival day, or that he should give something to the poor.

“He, therefore, having received the morsel, went out immediately. And it was night.”

Yes, it was night—a dark and gloomy night in the soul of the unfortunate, evil-minded Judas. The light of faith had gone out, the last spark of pure love was extinguished, and a dark, impenetrable night of spiritual blindness and obstinacy had settled down upon the soul of the most unhappy among men. And yet the divine Master, during the course of the evening, had acted toward him with the tenderest friendship and consideration; and, without letting the other apostles discover it, had even given to him the most touching and gentle warnings. But all was in vain; for the kindness of Jesus had turned the traitor’s heart to stone.

6. JESUS’ FAREWELL DISCOURSE. WHO IS GREATEST AMONG THE DISCIPLES

“When, therefore, he was gone out, Jesus said: Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and immediately will He glorify Him.

“And there was a strife among them, which of them seemed to be greater. And He said to them: The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that have power over them that are called beneficent. Let it not be so with you, but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the least; and he that is the chief, as he that serveth. For which is greater, he that sitteth at table, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at table? But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth. And you are they who have continued with Me in My temptations. I dispose to you as My Father hath disposed to Me a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

These words form the introduction to the significant and impressive farewell address spoken by the Saviour to the faith-

ful apostles, after the withdrawal of Judas. This last had gone out to arrange with the Jewish priests about the exact time and the ways and means of betraying Jesus. Thus the hour of His humiliation and suffering having come, the hour of glory for His heavenly Father as well as for Himself had also come. For, as the death-sacrifice of our Saviour is the most glorious act of homage to, and the completest recognition of, the majesty, justice, and sanctity of the heavenly Father, so it is, too, the greatest glory of the Son of man, who, by conquering with the cross, death, hell, and the devil, has merited the double glory of the resurrection and the ascension. But the apostles were not able to fully understand these mysteries. They supposed that the glory of the Son of man would be temporal glory, a triumph in the reconstructed kingdom of Israel. Hence they disputed among themselves now, as they had done on a previous occasion, as to who should have the first and largest share in this imaginary glory of their conquering Master. But Christ, with His usual forbearance and prudence, taught them that the real and true glory of His faithful servants was to be found only on the other side of the grave, in the realms of everlasting triumph and happiness. He warned them that only those who here below walk in the footsteps of their humble and patient Leader can hope to enter upon the enjoyment of this heavenly glory.

7. THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE CONTINUED. FOUR CONSOLATIONS

“Simon, Simon, behold satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren. My little children, yet a while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me, and as I said to the Jews, whither I go, you can not come: so I say it also to you now. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.

“Simon Peter saith to Him: Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered: Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me hereafter. Peter saith to Him: Why can not I follow Thee now? Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death: I will lay down my life for

Thee. Jesus answered him: Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Amen, amen, I say to thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, till thou thrice deny that thou knowest Me.

“And He said to them: When I sent you without purse, and script, and shoes, did you want anything? But they said: Nothing. Then He said unto them: But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a scrip; and he that hath not, let him sell his coat and buy a sword. For I say to you, that this that is written, must be fulfilled in Me, And with the wicked was He reckoned. For the things concerning Me have an end. But they said: Lord, behold here are two swords. And He said to them: It is enough.”

Alas, how totally unprepared, how utterly unable these simple apostles were, not excepting Peter himself, the chief among them, to penetrate into the mystery of the impending sufferings and death of Christ! Equally unprepared, too, and unable were they to discover and to understand the mystery of the utter disgrace, persecution, and desolation which would soon overtake themselves, because they were the followers of their humbled, defeated, and slain Master. Up to this hour, Master and disciples had passed many good and pleasant days in each other's company. They had fared well, for Jesus had provided miraculously for all their wants. Knowing their want of fortitude, He had been careful to avert from them all serious persecution and opposition. He had consoled, cheered, and encouraged them, by vouchsafing His divine presence always to them. But now a new and very gloomy day is beginning to dawn. It will be a day of contempt, of hatred, and of persecution. Humanly speaking, the apostles will have to depend on themselves, on their own resources, the money in their purses, the bread in their scrip, the sword at their side.

But, as has been already remarked, the apostles were incapable of understanding their situation. They took, in its most literal sense, the figurative language used by Christ concerning the purse, scrip, and sword. They could not soar to the high and noble conception of Jesus. They had no apprehension of impending danger, of threatening calamity, of imminent suffering or death. So little conscious were they of their own weakness and inefficiency, that St. Peter cried out with presumptuous zeal and precipitation: “Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison and to death.” Poor Peter! soon wilt thou discover, to thy grief and dishonor, how completely

thou hast deceived thyself. Thou wilt learn later, and in a trying school, how weak and unreliable human nature is, when in its boundless pride it foolishly imagines that it can stand without assistance from above. Thou wouldst fain go with thy divine Master into prison and to death. Poor, unsuspecting Peter! Strong as thou believest thyself to be, an obscure and lowly woman with a few words will lead thee to the denial of that very Master. It is well for thee that a merciful Lord, who has foreseen thy vacillation and departure from truth and fidelity, hath prayed for thee, that the faith which thou wouldst soon deny outwardly, might not fail within thee and be hopelessly and irrevocably shipwrecked on the rock of human respect. It is well for thee that, by virtue of this divine prayer, thou wert able to rise again after thy fall, and become a guide and support to thy brethren. It is well for us and for the whole Church, whose visible foundation-stone thou wast appointed to be, that the divine prayer of Jesus had the effect of moving thy heart to deep and lasting penance. By virtue of that divine prayer, thy own faith was saved, as well as the faith of thy successors, through long ages of persecution and trial. By virtue of that prayer of Jesus, the faith of our chief pastors, the Popes, has ever escaped shipwreck. Whatever they declare to the universal Church as articles of faith, must, by virtue of the Saviour's prayer, be free and untainted from the shadow of error. These words of Christ, although their meaning was not entirely plain and clear to the imperfect understandings of the apostles, made a deep and lasting impression on their souls. Hence the compassionate and considerate Jesus consoled them by diverting their attention from the misery of this poor earth to that blessed and happy land where they shall find relief from persecution and strife and opposition, and see the Son of man transfigured in the glory of the Father.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me, His only and co-equal Son. In My Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you, because I go to prepare you a place. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and I will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be: and whither I go you know, and the way you know.

“Thomas saith to Him: Lord, we know not whither Thou goest and how can we know the way? Jesus saith to him: I am the way and the truth and the life. No one cometh to the

Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would doubtless have known My Father also; and from henceforth you shall know Him, and you have seen Him.

“Philip saith to Him: Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. Jesus saith to him: So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known Me? Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth also the Father. How sayest thou: Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of Myself. But the Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? Believe at least on account of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you: he that believeth in Me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do: because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, that will I do.

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will send you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever, the spirit of truth, whom the world can not receive; because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him: but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans: I will come to you.

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more. But you shall see Me, because I live and you shall live. In that day (when I am risen again), you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.

“Judas (not he called Iscariot) saith to Him: Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us, and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him: If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love Him, and we will come to Him and will make our abode with Him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words: and the word which you have heard, is not mine, but the Father's who sent Me. These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and will suggest all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.

“Peace I leave to you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth it do I give it to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You have heard that I said to you, I go away and I come to you again. In case you loved Me, you would doubtless be glad that I go to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it shall have come to pass you may believe. Now I will not speak many things with you. For the prince of this world cometh: and in Me he hath not anything. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and that I do as the Father hath commanded Me, arise, let us go hence.¹

“And when they had said a hymn, He went out, according to His custom, to the mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him.”

Our loving Redeemer had many things more to say to His disciples, many more truths to impress upon their hearts and souls, than are contained in this discourse. Hence He continued to address them at great length, uttering words of wisdom and of warning, as He and they, with slow and solemn pace, turned their steps toward Mount Olivet. To His salutary words of instruction, He then added that sublime and lengthy prayer, usually called the intercessory prayer of our divine High-Priest. This sublime discourse of our blessed Saviour is at once a comforting farewell address to the apostles and a universal prayer for them and for all men.

In the first portion of this sublime discourse, our Lord directs attention to the kingdom of heaven, where want and persecution shall have no existence, where pain and affliction shall be transfigured into pleasure and happiness. Christ goes thither in advance. For that celestial paradise had been closed by sin, and He alone, by virtue of His passion and death, was able to re-open it. He was to be the first to enter it and prepare for every one of the elect a dwelling-place, corresponding to the measure of each one's sanctity and per-

¹St. Augustine, with many other commentators, is of opinion that when Jesus pronounced these words, “Let us go hence,” He really left the supper-room, accompanied by His apostles; hence the address which followed as well as the intercessory prayer, was uttered on the road to the garden of Olives. Other commentators, however, maintain that Christ meant merely to leave their places at table, and that He pursued His conversation in the same room. Were this the case, then the words of St. Matthew, “And when they had said a hymn,” etc., should be placed at the end of the intercessory prayer. We here follow the opinion of St. Augustine.

fection. Unless He preceded and went in advance to open the heavenly gates through the instrumentality of that key of heaven, the cross of sacrifice, no child of Adam could ever come to the eternal Father. For, alas! between heaven and earth, between Creator and creature, between God and man, sin had dug a yawning gulf of terror and despair. This dismal gulf our Lord Himself filled up with the merits of His good works; nay, He Himself became the golden bridge over the abyss, the Way through the Truth to the Light and the Life.

Again, our Saviour promised to His apostles that they and all faithful followers of the gospel should enjoy a delicious foretaste of heaven's happiness. What is the happiness of heaven? To see God face to face, to enjoy the beatific vision. O dazzling beauty of My God! how transcendent and illimitable Thou must be! for all that is fair, lovely, and charming on earth is but a dull and feeble ray of Thy splendor. O fullness of life, plenitude of riches, perfection of beauty, brightest of light, all comprised in My God! Eternity is not long enough to satisfy the Cherubim and Seraphim in the contemplation of so much goodness and beauty. Now all this unbounded wealth of beauty and happiness is also contained in the person of Jesus Christ. For although, under the aspect of His human nature, He is, as it were, subordinate to His eternal Father, yet, by virtue of His divinity, He is essentially co-equal with the Father, and is the expression of His glory. The person who looks upon Jesus Christ, the person to whom Christ deigns to manifest Himself, sees, as far and as fully as it is possible for the eye of human intellect to penetrate, the heavenly Father Himself. But here the divine Redeemer promises that He will manifest Himself to His apostles and to all others who will prove their fidelity, love, and obedience by doing His holy will.

In the third place, the Saviour, in His farewell discourse, consoles us all by directing our attention to the miracle-power of the true Church. As Christ dwells in the bosom of His heavenly Father, so, too, does He abide in His holy Church on earth. Having, even with His sacred humanity, entered into the glory of His Father, He continues to manifest from age to age this glory and this power in His Church. How does He do this? By the miraculous works of the apostles and the other saints of the Church, and by the still greater miracles which are wrought every day in the sacraments and in the

holy mass. All these miraculous effects are obtained from our blessed Redeemer, and are the fruit of prayer offered in His name. Truly, a new and glorious mode of prayer left to His faithful followers by the divine Teacher Himself! It is in the name of Jesus that the apostles and all their successors pray to heaven. For when they pray, they pray in intimate union with Jesus Christ, as if in identity of person with Him, so that, in some sense, it is not they who are praying, but the glorified Son of man within them, our Mediator and Advocate before the throne of the eternal Father in heaven. It is by virtue of this sublime and mysterious process of prayer that the Church accomplishes such miracles of grace and mercy. By virtue of such prayer every petition of ours will receive a hearing at that same throne of God, for all the faithful share in the advantages of such prayer.

Finally, our blessed Lord, before the separation, consoled His apostles by the promise of the Holy Ghost, who was to come down upon them on the following Pentecost. "The world," that is to say, the earthly and fleshly minded, those who are given up to the concupiscence of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life, such persons have no appreciation of the Spirit from above. They do not, they can not receive Him, because they do not desire Him, nor seek Him. But those who love Christ will receive this comforting Spirit, and together with Him they will receive the choicest of all goods of this life, namely, that long-promised and long-desired gift of heaven, about which the angels sang on Christmas night, "Peace on earth to men of good will."

CHAPTER X

THE DISCOURSE OF JESUS ON HIS WAY TO MOUNT OLIVET

(HOLY THURSDAY)

John xv. 1-16, 33; Matt. xxvi. 31-35; Mark xiv. 27-31

1. CHRIST IS THE VINE, AND THE DISCIPLES ARE THE BRANCHES

I AM the true vine: and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He will take away: and every one that beareth fruit He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean by reason of the

word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me: and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine: so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you. In this is My Father glorified, that you bring forth very much fruit, and become My disciples."

Here we have a beautiful and expressive simile: Christ is the trunk of the vine, and we are the branches. How beautifully expressive of the union and the oneness of spiritual life! For, as from the parent-stem of the vine, all the sap or life-power flows into the branches and produces buds, leaves, blossoms, and fruit, so does all that is good and meritorious in us for eternal life spring exclusively from the God-man power and virtue of Jesus Christ. He is the very soul of our souls. Poor, deluded man, who have separated yourself from Christ! You are a lopped-off branch. You imagine that you live, and yet you are spiritually dead. You imagine that you are working out successfully the problem of life, and yet all your exertions will avail nothing for eternity, for it is written, "Without *me*, you can do *nothing*." Poor, deluded family, who have torn yourselves from Christ, you are but a lopped-off branch. You fancy that you have firmly laid the foundation of future prosperity; but dissension and disunion will ensue, your riches will fall into strangers' hands, for it is written, "Without *me*, you can do *nothing*." Mistaken and perverted nation, who have allowed yourselves to be torn away by infidel leaders from the very source of national health and strength, you are indeed a rotten branch. The number of your poor and oppressed will increase, those who live on you will flatter you while they suck out your very life's blood. The happiness and prosperity transmitted to you by your forefathers will become a thing of the past, for it is written, "Without *me*, you can do *nothing*." Bear well in mind, Christian reader, that in Christ alone is wisdom, peace, and happiness. Cling to Him in an embrace of faith and love, and say with the Psalmist: "It is good for me to stick close to my God: to put my hope in the Lord God" (*Ps. lxxii. 23*).

2. THE UNION OF JESUS WITH HIS DISCIPLES FOUNDED ON CHARITY

Whence is it that the Saviour has become so intimately and inseparably united to us, poor unworthy creatures, that, like the branches on the parent-stem, we are as but one, and derive our life and our merit from His divine-human vital power? It is all the effect of love. And if this essential and vital union is to be continued, we must give love in return. And if we love Him, we must love also those whose brother He became by the incarnation, and whose Saviour He became by His death on the cross. For He Himself says:

“As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, as I also have kept My Father’s commandments, and do abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you: that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled. This is My commandments, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down His life for His friends. You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you. I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you. You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit: and your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that you love one another.”

3. BATTLE AND VICTORY. CHRIST FORETELLS THE PERSECUTIONS THAT WILL BEFALL THE DISCIPLES, AND THEIR VICTORIES WON THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST

Yes, love; disinterested, unselfish, self-sacrificing love; true and lasting love, which will live even when temporarily rejected; earnest and constant love, not flattering with empty words, but desiring the true happiness of one’s fellowmen; in a word, love for our neighbor for God’s sake, or Christian charity. This is the glorious mark and certain evidence of a child of God. But the world, which is not of God, that is, the evil powers of this world and those unhappy men who permit themselves to be guided and influenced by these corrupt and God-hating powers, this corrupt world does not know

such pure love. Hence it will meet Christ as well as His messengers of heavenly love, the apostles, with hatred and envy.

“If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated Me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember My word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake: because they know not Him that sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth Me: hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But that the word may be fulfilled which is written in their law: They hated Me without cause. But when the Paraclete cometh whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me: and you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning.

“These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized. They will put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God; and these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.”

And how very soon this hour of persecution did come upon the apostles! Jews and Pagans, Greeks and Romans, the East and the West, all precipitated themselves with furious rage upon the little band of brave apostles. In the midst of the most violent religious, social, and political storm, the work of the Lord was begun, and amid Jews and Pagans, Greeks and Romans, in the East and in the West, the kingdom of God was firmly and permanently founded. Alas, this dreadful hour, so truthfully predicted by the Saviour, the hour of hate and of persecution, seems to have come round again in the cycle of time. An angry war-cry of alarm is raised in every country against Christ and His Church.

And now, as our Lord is about to leave the apostles, He

deems it a proper time to speak not only of these persecutions, but also of the divine comforting Spirit, the Holy Ghost.

“But I told you not these things from the beginning, because I was with you: and now I go to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But I tell you the truth; it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment; of sin, because they believed not in Me; and of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see Me no longer; and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged. I have yet many things to say to you, but you can not bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak; and the things that are to come He shall show you. He shall glorify Me; because He shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you. All things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine. Therefore I said, that He shall receive of mine, and show it to you.”

These sublime parting words of our Saviour abound in profound mysteries. Dearest Saviour! Thou art going to Thy Father; by the way of the cross to Thy triumph, a way full of grace and good fortune for us. For, by treading this way of the cross and going thus to Thy Father, Thou hast earned and secured for us the saving influence and interposition of the Comforting Spirit, the Paraclete. By the perfection of the work of atonement, Thou hast rendered us competent to receive His sevenfold supernatural graces.

To the world, which wishes to know nothing of Christ, this Holy Spirit will bring the knowledge and involuntary conviction, as well as force the confession of three very important facts, namely, sin, justice, and judgment. He will first convince the world of sin, that is, He will compel it to feel the power of sin, together with all its consequent miseries, temporal and spiritual, of soul and of body. The world can now no longer refuse to acknowledge the positive presence and the aggressive force of this sin-misery. It must avow its utter inability to free itself from the deadly effects of wrong-doing among men, and that, too, notwithstanding the most enlightened, advanced, strenuous, and continued efforts made for the

purpose of ameliorating society. But the world is an unbelieving world. Now the indispensable condition of emancipation from the evils of wrong-doing among men, is a firm, humble, and loving faith in Christ. Wherever such faith prevails, there bloom and ripen the glowing fruits of Christ's "going to the Father," or of His death on the cross. There, too, flourishes the justice of the Holy Ghost, which consists in the sanctification of man, in his emancipation from sin, in holiness of life, and, as a consequence, in joy, peace, and happiness in the Lord. To this glorious spectacle the world can not close its eyes, hence it becomes involuntarily and painfully cognizant of the night of sin enshrouding it like a pall.

The Holy Ghost will also convince the world of judgment. By virtue of the death of Christ on the cross, the prince of this world, the devil, has already been convinced of judgment. He has been vanquished, put to shame, and stripped of that power which, in consequence of sin, he was permitted by Providence to acquire and to exercise over mankind. This single triumph of Christ will, through the mysterious operation of the Holy Ghost, become a permanent and ever-returning triumph in individual hearts. Hence every effort and assault made by the world in opposition to God's kingdom will, notwithstanding temporary appearances to the contrary, be eventually put to shame, and made to stand in all its helplessness, with the mask torn from its face.

4. SADNESS AND JOY. CHRIST FORETELLS HIS DEATH, AND ITS GLORIOUS RESULTS

Observe here, Christian reader, with what tenderness and delicacy the Saviour prepares His apostles to hear the sad news, that the hour of separation has at last come. He has already foretold to them the coming of the Holy Ghost, with His manifold graces and effects, the triumph of God's kingdom upon earth and their own admission into the realms of heaven. And now He uses less sorrowful words to communicate the painful information. He cheers their sad hearts with comforting parables.

"A little while, and now you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me; because I go to the Father. Then some of His disciples said one to another: What is this that He saith to us: A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me, and, because I go to the Father? They said therefore: What

is this that He saith, A little while? we know not what He speaketh. And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask Him, and He said to them: Of this do you inquire among yourselves, because I said: A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me. Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you. And in that day you shall not ask Me any thing. Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked any thing in My name: Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs. The hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father. In that day you shall ask in My name; and I say not to you, that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and I go to the Father. His disciples say to Him: Behold now Thou speakest plainly, and speaketh no proverb; now we know that Thou knowest all things, and Thou needest not that any man should ask Thee. By this we believe that Thou comest forth from God. Jesus answered them: Do you now believe?"

"Do you now believe?" Christian reader, do you thoroughly understand the import of this sorrowful word of the Saviour, *now*? Yes, *now*; for in a few hours it will become painfully evident that the faith of the apostles was not a living faith, nor one animating and influencing their whole soul, nor yet a faith to withstand trial and temptation. It has yet to be made such a faith. It will be made such a faith by the coming of the Holy Ghost. O, with what different eyes will these apostles then look upon their divine Master, when He will reveal Himself to them, not palpably, nor in the form of a servant, but inwardly, by the light of the Holy Ghost, and in all the majesty and splendor of His glorified state! This enlightenment, and a right to the highest favors

of divine condescension, the Saviour will earn for them by His going to the Father; that is, by going through His death-sacrifice.

Then will dawn the day when His apostles' prayer will no longer be a mere asking and a begging, like that of a mendicant who has no rights, but a confident demand. For, in faith and love, they will have applied to their souls the infinite merits of Christ's atonement, and thereby merited the "love of the Father, the right to be heard." O sublime and inconceivable dignity of redeemed man! Through Christ, the creature has secured rights and claims on His Creator. The Most High of heaven has become a debtor to His servants on earth. When the Christian draws near in prayer to the throne of the Almighty, he carries in his hand a title-deed which God must recognize and honor; for it is the precious certificate of heirship and of a child's rights through the Holy Ghost, signed and sealed with the purchasing blood of the Victim sacrificed upon the cross.

It is true, the apostles must be separated from their loving Master, before this kingdom of grace and of glory shall be fully and permanently established in their souls. The wailing on their side for the slaughtered Victim, and the glad mockery of the enemy, must first be heard in the land. Yet the very event which will rend their hearts with grief and fill the fiendish breasts of the enemy with momentary gratification, the passing through the portals of an ignominious death by their beloved Master, will, in itself, become an inexhaustible and irresistible torrent-fountain of heavenly comfort, and an endless mine of wealth and grace.

5. NIGHT AND DAY. CHRIST FORETELLS THE DEFECTION AND THE CONVERSION OF HIS APOSTLES

"Then Jesus said to them: Behold the hour cometh, and it is now come, that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. All ye shall be scandalized in Me this night; for it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world. And Peter answering, said to Him: Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scan-

dalized. And Jesus saith to him: Amen I say to thee, to-day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. But Peter spoke the more vehemently: Although I should die together with Thee, I will not deny Thee. And in like manner, also, said they all."

CHAPTER XI

OUR LORD'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER

John xvii. 1-26

"THESE things Jesus spoke: and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said: Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. Now this is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do: and now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world; thine they were, and to Me Thou gavest them: and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given Me are from Thee: because the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them: and they have received them, and have known in very deed that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, because they are Thine. And all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am not in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as we also are. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name. Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture may be fulfilled. And now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy filled in themselves. I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, as I also am not

of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world. Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for them do I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as we also are one. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast also loved Me. Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me; that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world. Just Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have made known Thy name to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

These sublime words express and explain some of the profoundest mysteries of the grand mystery of the atonement. *The heavenly Father is glorified by His only begotten Son.* Yes, in this magnificent mystery there is a glorifying of God; but, besides this, there is unspeakable condescension toward us. A high-priest, who is at once human and divine, makes himself the voluntary victim and is slain on the altar of the cross, in order to appease divine justice and sanctity; thus to redeem and sanctify mankind. A divine-human Teacher, still glorifying the Father and deferring to benighted man, brings down truth from heaven and reveals to man, by word and wonder, the perfections of the eternal Father. A divine-human King promulgates to us the laws of heaven, and by precept and example induces us to become worthy of our Father in heaven, to become perfect.

Moreover, the incarnate Son of God is glorified by His Father. Here again we discover the glorification of the Perfect One, mingled with love and condescension toward us. This Jesus of Nazareth, who was rejected at His birth by the Bethlehemites, at His entry into Jerusalem by the Jews, and



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denied and cast out at the hour of His death by the people of Jerusalem, is glorified on Bethlehem's plains by choirs of chanting angels, is recognized on Jordan's banks by a voice from heaven, and vindicated on the cross of Calvary by appalling wonders in agitated nature, as the only begotten of the Father, the Son of the living God. This same Jesus of Nazareth bursts the bonds of death, arises in glory from the grave, and ascends in triumph to heaven where His eternal Father had prepared for Him a throne at His own right hand. All the redeemed are called to a participation in this twofold glory of the Father and of the Son on earth, and to a blissful participation of this same glory forever in heaven.

CHAPTER XII

CHRIST IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Matt. xxvi. 36-56; Mark xiv. 32-52; Luke xxii. 40-53; John xviii. 1-12

1. HIS DEATH-AGONY. THE TRIPLE PRAYER. THE COMFORTING ANGEL

“WHEN Jesus had spoken these things He went out with His disciples over the brook Cedron. And He went, according to His custom, to the mountain of Olives, and His disciples also followed Him. Then Jesus cometh with them into a village called Gethsemane, where there was a garden, into which He and His disciples entered. He said to His disciples: Sit you here, till I go and pray yonder. Pray that you enter not into temptation.

“And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to fear, and to be heavy, to be sorrowful and sad. Then He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay here and watch with Me.

“And having gone a little further, He Himself was withdrawn from them the length of a stone's cast, and kneeling down, He prayed, saying: Father, all things are possible to Thee: if Thou wilt, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.

“And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them asleep through grief. And He said to them: Why sleep you? And He saith to Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? What, could you not watch one hour with

Me? Arise, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

“And going away again, He prayed, saying the same words: My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done. And He cometh again and findeth them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And they knew not what to answer Him.

“And leaving them, He went again, and prayed the third time, saying the self-same words. And an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony He prayed the longer, and His sweat was as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.

“And He cometh the third time to His disciples and saith to them: Sleep now and take your rest; it is enough. It is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; behold, he that will betray Me is at hand.”

What appalling mystery is this before me now! I see the second Adam in the garden. The fierce struggle between death and life has begun. The Son of man has prepared Himself to retrieve, by a grand and glorious victory over satan, the defeat of the first Adam in the garden of Eden. In close proximity to the divine Master, I see His three favorite apostles, Peter, James and John, the same who had been witnesses of His transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and who are now chosen to be the witnesses of the deep degradation of this same divine Master, that they may proclaim it for all time, and thus preach the mystery of a God debased for love of us.

I see a threefold miracle before my eyes. I see the King of glory prostrate on the earth in affliction, in agony unto death, covered with a bloody sweat, and I hear a wonderful prayer issuing from His sacred lips. I see an angel in the act of comforting and strengthening the King of the angels. Permit me, dearest Jesus, to cast a glance into this threefold mystery, that I may ever afterward be deeply impressed with holy reverence therefor, and thus participate in its blessings: blessings which will fortify me in my own death-agony.

The blessed Redeemer of mankind is now crushed with grief and melancholy. His whole frame quivers, as He exclaims: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” This dreadful state of mental depression in our divine Jesus was not, as it is with ordinary men, the effect of a depression of the vital

forces, which takes place in the human system, not only without, but even in direct opposition to the free will of the sufferer. The Son of man had, of His own free will, called down upon Himself, so to speak, this terrible weight of anguish, or at least had permitted it to come upon Him. It was, moreover, a terribly real mental agony, an anguish such as no human tongue can describe, no human heart can endure, no human brain can conceive. It was an anguish which penetrated and rent not only His holy soul, but cut into every fiber and tissue of His virginal body, oppressing His heart so violently that the blood¹ actually oozed from the pores of the skin, coursed down His face, breast and limbs, and saturated the very earth on which He knelt.

Christ's love for mankind demanded and obtained this excruciating agony. This extraordinary and dreadful spectacle of the bleeding and agonized face of Jesus ought to arouse our slothful and indifferent souls from their lethargy and make them understand how dreadful, how inconceivably dreadful, must have been this soul-anguish which He so willingly took upon Himself for our sake in the garden of Olives.

Ask your divine Saviour for the reasons why He underwent this awful and excessive agony in the garden, and He will answer: *Thou!* Thou unfortunate, thou sinner, thou hast been the cause of My excessive anguish of soul and of body. I had consented to take upon Myself all the accumulated punishments which the human race has deserved on account of its iniquities, and which it will deserve till the end of time. These sins, then, stood, in all their vast numbers and dreadful enormity, before My eyes. I saw before Me, too, the chains with which, like a culprit, I was to be bound, the ropes with which I was to be dragged before the judgment-seats of wicked judges, the blows on My face, the mockeries and jeers, the scourges with which My flesh would be torn into shreds, the crown of thorns which would pierce My temples, the jagged nails which would lacerate My feet and hands, the cross on which I was to hang, the frightful desolation and abandonment of My death-hour, the terror of death

¹The most reliable writers and doctors of antiquity, such as Irenæus, Epiphanius, Jerome, and others, assure us that Jesus Christ did really shed drops of blood during the agony in the garden. And not only the pagan philosopher Aristotle, but modern scientists, such as Calmet, Maldonatus, and others, assert the possibility of such an unusual sweat of blood in a case of excessive mental depression and anxiety.

itself. I saw all these horrors staring Me in the face, and I shuddered. And as human nature is always terrified at the sight of suffering, and shudders in the presence of death, and as the human nature which I have assumed is the tenderest, purest, and most perfect of natures, it shuddered so violently at the dreadful sight of such extreme suffering and at the prospect of such a painful death, that My agony in the garden was as excruciating as My very death-throes on Calvary. Indeed, it was in this dreadful hour and place that I entered upon the death-struggle which did not cease for a moment, till I yielded up My soul upon the cross. And these long-continued death-horrors I chose to undergo, with a view of relieving the agony of the dying sons of Adam, of alleviating thy own death-agony. During that hour of agony in Gethsemane, I saw writhing in the throes of death all those who have died and all those who will die till the end of time. I saw them shrink and shudder at the first opening glimpse of eternity. I saw their bodies distorted with pain, as the soul in its flight burst the bands which had held them together. I saw the cold death-sweat upon millions of ghastly faces. I saw the evil spirits hovering over their victims in this critical moment, tormenting them with temptations to despair. I heard their last melancholy groans and the dismal rattle in their gasping throats. Ah, all these dying creatures are My brethren, bone of My bone, and flesh of My flesh. I am the head, they are the members. Their death-agony is mine. I desired to pass through mine in Gethsemane and on Calvary, offering it amid fervent prayers to the eternal Father as an atoning sacrifice for sin, so that henceforth all who, during life, would remember with compassion and sympathy My bitter passion and death, and in their hour of death would call on Me, should triumph gloriously over death and hell, and depart this life in peace. This is a profound and a grace-abounding truth or mystery of which thou shouldst take timely advantage, if thou wouldst pass through an easy and happy death. And yet thou must not suppose that this vision of millions in the agony of death, seen so vividly by Me in the garden, was the principal and only cause of My dreadful sufferings. It was sin, the countless and enormous iniquities of the whole human race, the sins that I had freely and in compassionating love taken upon Myself, the loathsomeness, guilt, and weight of which, at that hour, bore Me down to the earth. I was overpowered with all the blasphemies, perjuries, curses, enmities,

persecutions, hypocrisies, falsehoods, thefts, cheating, injustices, impurities, wrongs of widows and orphans, disobedience of ungrateful children, the heaven-crying sins of negligent and vicious parents, suicides, and murders. Understand, too, O man, that I had assumed on My soul the weight of all those crimes, just as if I had been guilty of them Myself. My pure and spotless soul shuddered at the contact, My heart was ready to part in two under the heavy burden, and yet this was not the most awful part of what I suffered in the garden. Alas! that My bitter anguish should have been suffered in vain for millions of obstinate, impenitent men; alas! that the fire of My divine-human love should not have been penetrating enough to soften their flinty hearts, that so many should despise My teachings, deride My precepts and counsels, desecrate the sacraments of My grace, and notwithstanding My atoning and redeeming death, should die the endless death of the damned! This dismal sight it was, standing dreadfully plain before My face, that filled My soul with its most torturing pangs; this it was that forced the sweat of blood from My pores.

Here you have then the fourfold cause of the agony of your Saviour in the garden. The more seriously you contemplate this awful mystery, the more profoundly will you succeed in penetrating into the second mystery of Gethsemane, namely, the mystery of the thrice-repeated, miraculous prayer of your adorable Redeemer.

It is not enough to simply believe that Christ, as true man, pronounced this prayer for Himself, or prayed in this manner merely to give an example to redeemed man, to teach him how to have recourse, in time of affliction and necessity, to earnest, persevering, and God-given prayer. These two explanations are good and true, but we must believe firmly also, that Christ in Gethsemane prayed especially in His character as Head of His Church. Endeavor to understand rightly and fully the meaning of this last sentence. The whole life of the Church, the entire history of God's kingdom upon earth, is an unbroken history of suffering, a perpetual martyrdom. As our holy Church, the pure bride of Christ crucified, passes on her way through time, she is ignored by worldlings, persecuted by the powerful, derided by false scientists, denied and betrayed by disloyal sons. Jesus Christ is her Head, and she is inseparably united to Him. Therefore, her martyrdom is His martyrdom; and when in the garden of Olives He, like

Job, wrestles with His heavenly Father in earnest prayer, this prayer is not only the prayer of the sacred person of Christ, but is, in a most special manner, a prayer of the Church militant, a prophetic prayer. Yes, in the sacred person of Christ, as He prays in the garden, pray also the countless armies of coming martyrs, the persecuted bishops, the calumniated priests, the plundered and banished religious, and all those faithful laymen who have been reviled and persecuted for justice' sake. In behalf of these, and in the name of them all, Christ prayed: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from Me. But yet not My will, but Thine be done."

Christ, by going forward to prayer three times, wished to teach us that we, too, should pray in a threefold manner for a threefold object, namely, for the remission of past sins, for the removal of present evil habits, and for protection from future occasions of sin; that, by persevering prayer, we should obtain a triple shield against the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life; that, in like manner, we should offer our homage to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

And then a third mystery is presented to us. The holy evangelist, St. Luke, relates it briefly in the few but expressive words: "And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him." What meaneth this apparition, O my Jesus? Thou hast within Thee the fulness of the Godhead and from Thy wealth every living being draws strength and happiness, and yet Thou chooseth to receive strength from an angel, one of Thy own creatures. This surely is a great and incomprehensible miracle of condescension.

A miracle of humility and of love! The only begotten Son of the eternal Father wished to humble Himself so deeply and so thoroughly, and, as Son of man, to come so near to the condition of a child of man with all his wants, that He who condescended to partake of human nourishment from the sacred person of His Virgin-Mother, was pleased to accept an angel's assistance in His agony, as He was pleased to accept the help of Simon the Cyrenean in the carriage of His cross. Besides, our blessed Teacher wished to impress us with the excellence and efficacy of prayer. Abandoned by all men, even by His chosen apostles, who, thoughtless and unsympathetic, have dropped to sleep, the Son of man turns to His heavenly Father with a thrice-repeated, fervent prayer,

when behold a messenger comes from heaven, bringing Him strength and consolation. Pray, then, Christian reader, especially pray in time of mental depression, of trial and affliction, and when deserted by your fellow-creatures; for the author of all consolation, He who was Himself comforted by an angel, will take pity on you and send His angel to you; that is, He will give you counsel, encouragement, and help. Pray, therefore, repenting sinner, for He who assumed the sins of the whole world will send thee His angel, a messenger from heaven, thy father-confessor, who, by the power of the triune God, will lift the heavy load of sin from thy shoulder and declare thy sins forgiven.

The Venerable Bede very aptly remarks: "In one place in Holy Writ we read that angels came and *ministered* unto Him; here it is stated simply that an angel came to *strengthen* Him; the former passage has reference to the divine nature of Christ, the latter to His human nature."

No human mind can conceive, nor human tongue express, what conversation passed between our Lord and the angel, nor the mysterious aid and relief sent to the suffering Son by His compassionate Father in heaven. This, however, we know for certain, that the strength and comfort brought from heaven by the angel did not lessen the anguish of our dear Redeemer, but rather augmented it. The angel strengthened Jesus, in order that He might suffer with increased fortitude. The angel strengthened Jesus by picturing to His mind the abundant and precious fruit of His sufferings, but the sufferings themselves were not diminished. Hence, as the evangelist informs us, it was only after the angel's coming that our Saviour fell into His agony and discharged through His pores the sweat of blood that ran down to the ground. "And being in an agony He prayed the longer. And His sweat was as drops trickling down upon the ground."

Christian reader, fall down in spirit and kiss the soil consecrated by such precious dews. Venerate and love the scene of this profound mystery, the blood-stained earth of the garden of Olives. O venerated and highly favored spot, which has been moistened with the blood of the Son of man! Thrice holy and blessed rock, on which the Saviour of the world lay prostrate, and which was bedewed with His tears and stained with His blood! O sacred cave, consecrated by the sadness and the prayers of Jesus! Accept, merciful Saviour, my sincerest gratitude for the anguish undergone for my sake,

for the prayer which Thou didst offer for me, for all the precious drops of Thy bloody sweat poured out for love of me. I lay my sinful head upon the spot where Thou didst strive in vain to rest Thine, and striking my sinful heart, I say: O Lord Jesus Christ, be merciful to me, help me in my last agony, and let my last end be commended to Thee. Amen.

2. THE KISS OF JUDAS

“And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, and also who betrayed Him, knew the place, because Jesus had often resorted thither together with His disciples. And behold, while Jesus was yet speaking, cometh Judas, having received a band of soldiers and servants from the chief-priests and the scribes and the elders, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves, with lanterns and torches and weapons, sent by the Pharisees. And he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; hold Him fast, and lead Him away carefully. And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail, Rabbi. And he kissed Him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?”

O divine patience and forbearance, unspeakable love of my Redeemer! He greets the wretched traitor as “friend,” although of all the crimes perpetrated in those dreadful hours of the Passion and against the Son of man, there was none so despicable, so unnatural, and so damnable, as the crime of Judas. In this one act lay, in a certain sense, all the crimes and cruelties of the Passion. If Christ was bound and dragged into the courts, mocked, spit upon, struck in the face, scourged and nailed to the cross, all these indignities may, in a certain sense, be traced to the deed of the traitor. And who is this traitor? He is of the household of Christ, a friend, an apostle, who had been honored with countless favors, the once well-beloved spiritual son of the divine Master. And how did this renegade complete his mean work? By the most sacred mark of true love and friendship, a kiss. What a monster of ingratitude, faithlessness, and hypocrisy!

On whom is this act of cruel ingratitude perpetrated? On the very person who, during three years, had shown to the traitor the tenderest, most magnanimous, and winning love and kindness. Consider here how much Christ suffered in this hypocritical embrace of Judas. The more refined, deep-seated,

true, and tender the love of the betrayed one, the more keen and cutting the disappointment, when, instead of reciprocal love and fidelity, treachery and hatred were returned. Oh, what a reproachful look that must have been which Jesus cast upon Judas, as he advanced to embrace Him! Oh, what a heart-piercing question, when Jesus asked: "Friend, whereto art thou come?" Oh, how hell must have rejoiced when the enemies of Jesus mockingly exclaimed: "One of His own people hath betrayed Him!" Alas, how dreadful must the grief of Jesus have been, to see Himself, in the very presence of His enemies, betrayed by His own disciple!

Kiss of Judas! What a horribly contradictory expression! But still more horrible is the reflection that this kiss of Judas is being constantly repeated; that Jesus, on the Mount of Olives, saw before Him, not Judas alone in the flesh, but myriads of traitorous disciples waiting to repeat the sacrilege.

3. THE ARREST OF JESUS

"Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered Him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am He. And Judas also who betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon, therefore, as He had said to them: I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground."

The holy church-father, St. Augustine, here remarks: "Behold the power of a single word from the lips of Jesus! Although He raises no sword, the well-armed, boasting, and presumptuous gang fall helpless at His feet. If He who was about to be dragged to judgment, had such power then, what shall He not be able to accomplish when He shall come in a cloud of power and majesty to be Himself the judge? If, at the point of death, He is so mighty, what will He be when in His glory?"

"Again, therefore, He asked them: Whom seek ye? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered: I have told you that I am He: if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way. That the word might be fulfilled which He said: Of them which Thou hast given Me, I have not lost any one.

"Then they drew near, and laid hands on Jesus and held Him. And they that were about Him, seeing what would follow, said to Him: Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"

Then Simon Peter, one of those who were with Jesus, stretching forth his hand, drew his sword, and struck the servant of the high-priest, and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was Malchus.

“But Jesus answering, said: Suffer ye thus far. And when He had touched his ear, He healed it. Then Jesus said to Peter: Put up thy sword into the scabbard, its place; for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I can not ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels? The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that so it must be done?

“In that same hour Jesus said to the chief-priests and magistrates of the temple, and the ancients, and the multitude, that were come to Him: Are you come out, as it were, against a thief, with swords and clubs to apprehend Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and you laid not hands on Me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness. All this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

“Then His disciples leaving Him, all fled away. A certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and they laid hold on him. But he, casting off the linen cloth, fled from them, naked. Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him.”

And thus was fulfilled what the prophet Jeremias had foretold: “Christ the Lord is taken in our sins: to whom we said, Under Thy shadow we shall live among the Gentiles.” So, too, was verified the prediction of the prophet Zacharias: “Strike the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.” O suffering Jesus, how Thy heart must have bled with pain, when, after the flight of Thy disciples, Thou foundest Thyself lonely and deserted, given over completely to the ruthless conduct of Thy enemies. Well mayest Thou have said with the Psalmist: “I am become a stranger to My brethren.” And yet Thou wast not angry at these faint-hearted men; nay, in Thy kindness of heart, Thou hadst expressly commanded Thy persecutors to leave them unmolested; for the day of Pentecost had not yet dawned, the glorious Spirit of strength, and of wisdom, and of unshaken constancy, had not yet come down upon them, and they had not the strength to give testimony

of Thee when in the hands of Thy enemies. "If, therefore, you seek Me, let *these* go away." These words are expressive of the most distinterested kindness. The Saviour requires a sacrifice of heroic fidelity and constancy from His followers, only in proportion to the special graces that He has given them.

O sublime dignity of the Son of God! Calm and collected, resigned, and yet solicitous about His dear disciples, He advances toward His enemies. As the first movement toward loosening those bonds of sin and of eternal death fastened upon us by Adam when he stretched forth his hand for the forbidden fruit, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, stretches forth His innocent hands to be tied by the persecutors. But first, wishing to make them feel that He is really the Son of the living God, and is going to be sacrificed of His own free will, He performs in their presence a fourfold miracle. He first struck His enemies with blindness, so that, although they had witnessed the embrace of Judas, and had thus known whom they were to take, they could no longer see the person of the Saviour, and laid hands on Him only when He freely gave Himself up. Jesus here wished to show the folly and uselessness of cunning treachery; for it is written, there is neither wisdom, nor prudence, nor counsel against the Lord. He next, by a single word, threw the entire crowd on the ground, thereby foreshadowing the fate to come sooner or later on those who oppose truth and grace. He also prevented the Jews from laying hands upon His apostles, though they were very much incensed against them, and especially against St. Peter. He, and He alone, will give up His life, like the good shepherd, for His flock. By a fourth miracle, He healed the ear of Malchus, cut off by St. Peter in his impulsive zeal for his Master.

To be sure, the zeal of the true-hearted apostle was not in accord with the meek spirit of Christ, and Jesus chided him for this rash act, especially as it was not done exactly in defense of his captured Master, but was rather an outburst of anger and revenge. And yet the action denoted a faithful and generous heart. Yet it would seem to be a dispensation of Providence; for, as Moses, who had been appointed the Head of the church in the old law, was a brave and intrepid defender of the justice and honor of God, it seems becoming that a man of the same daring character should be the Head and leader of the Church of the New Testament. We may also

infer from this incident that only such men as love truth and justice with a decided heart and hate error and wrong vigorously, are worthy of election by God to govern and teach in His kingdom.¹

CHAPTER XIII

THE PASSION NIGHT

(BETWEEN HOLY THURSDAY AND GOOD FRIDAY)

Matt. xxvi. 55-75; Mark xiv. 53-72; Luke xxii. 54-65; John xviii. 13-27

REMAIN with your Redeemer during the weary hours of this awful night, and witness the indignities and tortures which this faithless and obstinate people will heap upon their Lord and Saviour. You will find five principal dismal scenes, on which you may gaze and ponder seriously: first, the journey of the captured Saviour from the garden of Gethsemane to the city of Jerusalem; secondly, the hearing before the high-priest Annas; thirdly, the hearing before his son-in-law, Caiphas; fourthly, the first mockery of Christ in the outer court of the high-priest's palace; fifthly, Peter's denial.

1. JESUS IS BOUND, AND THEN DRAGGED FROM GETHSEMANE TO JERUSALEM

Who can describe or even imagine the diabolical joy and low insolence of the soldiers and servants of the high-priest, as they dragged our Lord out of the garden, across the valley of Josaphat, over the brook Cedron, up to Jerusalem, and into the high-priest's palace? But five days previous, our Lord had traversed this road; but, ah, how different the circumstances, how changed the company! Then, crowds of joyous and friendly people pressed around Him, waving green palm-branches above His head; now, swords and clubs are held over Him. Then, the attendants sang His praises and declared Him to be the Son of David and the King of Israel; now, our dear Saviour retraces His steps amid the wild orgies

¹"And in those days, Moses went out to his brethren, and saw their affliction; and an Egyptian striking one of his brethren, he slew the Egyptian."

"And Moses returned from the mount, carrying the two tables of the testimony in his hand. And when he came nigh to the camp, he saw the calf and the dances: and being very angry, he threw the two tables out of his hand, and broke them at the foot of the mount" [2 Mos.].

and ruthless mockeries of His enemies. The distance from the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of Mount Olivet, where our Saviour was apprehended, to the house of Annas, was a full mile and a half. Over this distance, by a rough and stony mountain-road, our Saviour was hurried along, leaving the ground stained with the marks of His bleeding feet. The servants who carried the torches went in front; behind them followed Jesus, tightly manacled, derided by the servants of the priests and Pharisees, and beaten and jostled by the soldiers; the meek and silent Saviour of man bowed down with sadness and pain, like an innocent lamb among blood-thirsty wolves. He was so tightly bound, and so rudely jostled, that He fell down seven different times. Especially at the bridge over the brook Cedron, He received a cruel fall; for His hands being tied behind Him, His sacred brow came violently against the ground, where He lay bleeding and helpless, till His enemies, amid shouts of laughter, mingled with curses, lifted Him to His feet. They then drove Him with clubs and swords up the steep mountain-path of Sion and into the city.

2. JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH-PRIEST ANNAS

“And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high-priest of that year. Now Caiphas was he who had given the counsel to the Jews: that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. And that disciple was known to the high-priest, and went with Jesus into the palace of the high-priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then the other disciple who was known to the high-priest went out and spoke to the porteress and brought in Peter.

“The high-priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews went, and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou Me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken to them; behold they know what things I have said. And when He had said these things, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answerest Thou to the high-priest so? Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?

“And Annas sent Him bound to the high-priest Caiphas.”

Annas questioned the Redeemer about His disciples. Alas, how keenly Jesus felt the sarcasm contained in this question! Alas, one of them had betrayed Him, had sold Him to His enemies for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver, the rest had ignobly fled! The aged villain knew these facts, and took delight in rending the heart of the deserted, betrayed, bartered Saviour.

And whilst the high-priest, as a preparation for greater indignities, is thus amusing himself by addressing cruel and cutting remarks and questions to Jesus, his servant hastens to imitate his master, and amuses himself in a less refined, though hardly less cruel manner, and strikes the Lord of heaven and earth in the face, and presumes to correct and call to order eternal Wisdom itself. Alas, how painfully true was the melancholy prediction of the prophet Jeremias: “He shall give His cheek to him that striketh Him; He shall be filled with reproaches!”

Is it our Saviour who has to undergo this galling insult? Our Jesus who is thus slapped in the face and yet utters no word of omnipotence to smite the villain to the earth? No; the hand which struck the author of life is not withered, while the hand which King Jeroboam raised against a prophet was instantly paralyzed.¹ No; the patient Jesus endures this disgrace meekly, and if He replies to the villainous servant, it is only to deny the insinuation that He had been wanting in deference to the high-priest.

3. JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH-PRIEST CAIPHAS

In the house of Caiphas, the high-priest, “all the priests and the scribes and the ancients were assembled together. And Peter followed Him afar off, even to the court of the high-priest; and going in, that he might see the end. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sitting about it, Peter was in the midst of them, and warmed himself.

“The chief-priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus that they might put Him to death. And

“And when the king had heard the word of the man of God, which he had cried out against the altar in Bethel, he stretched forth his hand from the altar, saying: Lay hold on him. And the hand which he stretched forth against him withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him” [3 Kings xiii. 4].

they found none, whereas many false witnesses had come in. For many bore false witness against Him, and this evidence did not agree. And last of all there came two false witnesses, and rising up, they bore false witness against Him, saying: We have heard Him say, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and after three days to rebuild it; I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another not made with hands. And their testimony did not agree.

“And the high-priest rising up in the midst, asked Jesus, saying: Answerest Thou nothing to the things laid to Thy charge by these men? But He held His peace and answered nothing. Again the high-priest asked of Him and said to Him: I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou art Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replied: Thou hast said it: I am. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven.

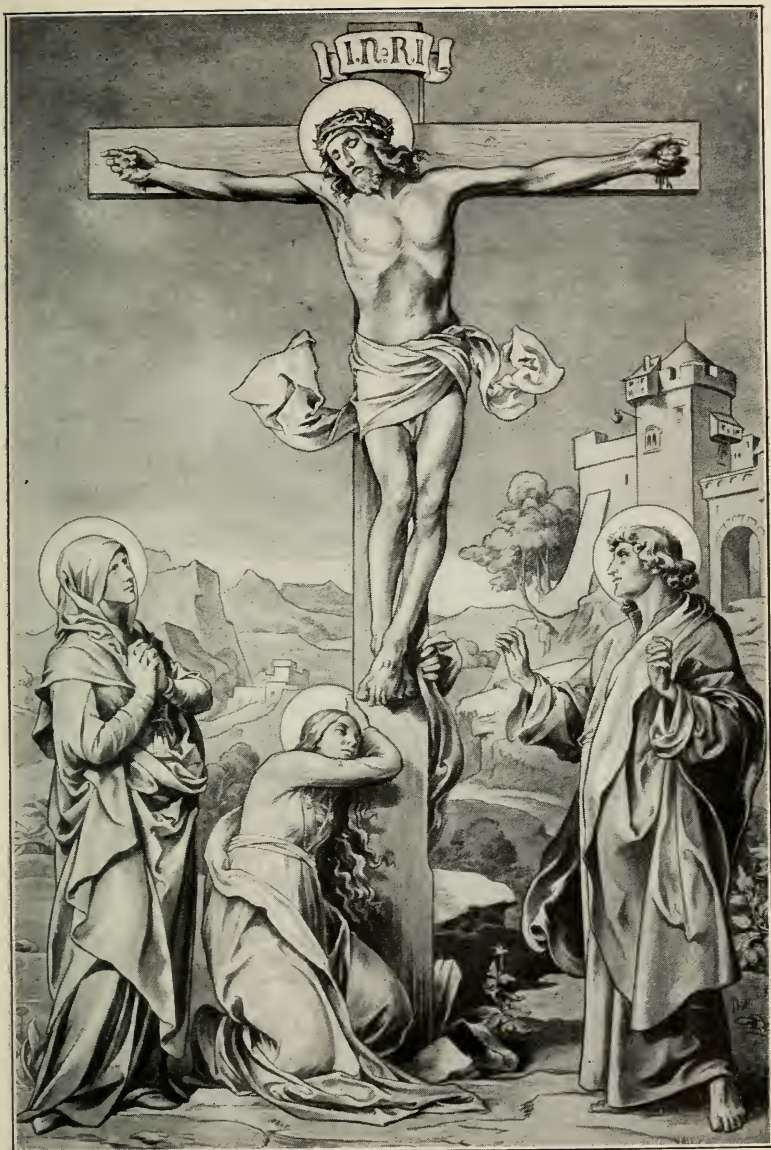
“Then the high-priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? But they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.”

“And they all condemned Him.” Consider how strictly to the letter these words were verified; how impiety presumed to mount the throne of justice and sit in judgment on the Most High and Ever Just God. “They all condemned Him.” The high-priests, Annas and Caiphas condemned Him as a blasphemer who would make Himself God, and who despised the temple of the Lord. The Roman governor Pilate condemned Him because, although he considered Him to be innocent, he looked upon Him as a man of little or no influence, and hence recklessly sentenced Him to be scourged and crucified, lest the Jews should raise a sedition and he should lose the favor of the emperor. The Galilean prince, Herod, condemned Him as a poor imbecile, deserving to be mocked and despised. The traitor Judas condemned Him, and treated Him as an animal to be sold, and to be bought at a cost of thirty pieces of silver. The scribes and Pharisees condemned Him as a false teacher, as one possessed by the devil, as a glutton and wine-drinker, as an associate of publicans and other sinners, as a disturber among the people, and an enemy of Cæsar. The Roman soldiers condemned Him as an insane creature who fancied Himself to be a king, and hence they put on Him a purple gar-

ment, putting a crown of thorns upon His head and a reed into His hand, and bowed mockingly before Him. Finally, the whole Jewish nation condemned Him as the worst of men and as eminently deserving death, as a worse culprit even than Barabbas. "And they all condemned Him."

Since Christ was thus ignominiously treated, can we wonder if evil-minded and ignorant men in all ages have presumed to sit in judgment on the Church, His spouse, to bring false witnesses against her, and to condemn her? But we are not deceived or misled by such unjust condemnations. If tempted to grieve and to be angry at the blasphemies, accusations, and false testimony brought against the Church of God, we need but to turn our eyes on the innocent Jesus, accused falsely and condemned falsely, and to say to ourselves: If impiety sat in judgment upon the Master, why should it not seek to do the same thing to His disciples and representatives? Scandals must come, but wo to him by whom they come.

Our first parents in paradise did speak in order to excuse their sin by vain words; our second parent, Jesus Christ, held His peace and did not utter a word to vindicate Himself. By this humble silence, He atoned, as St. Jerome remarks, for the vain excuses of our first parents, as well as for our own countless sins of the tongue, teaching us the genuine excellence and great value of silence. Christ was silent. But now, when the high-priest questions Him, in the name of the living God and in the matter of Christ's divinity, when the examination bears not on the words and deeds of the Son of man, when the honor and glory of God are concerned, Jesus breaks silence and pronounces solemnly that candid, clear and indubitable, unquestionable testimony, which has ever since put to shame all those who would fain deny the Godhead of Christ. "Thou hast said it; I am." That is to say, In the name of the living God, I affirm that I am Christ, the Son of the eternal Father. The high-priest Caiphas understood the full force and true meaning of this answer. For Christ did not mean to declare Himself simply a friend or favorite of God, nor such a son of God as every good and just man is, but He positively asserted that He was the only begotten, consubstantial Son of the heavenly Father. It was thus that Caiphas understood His declaration. It was in this literal sense that the whole high council accepted His statement. Christ even strengthened and explained His meaning by adding: "Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right



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hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven." Hear this testimony, O unjust judge, Caiphas! Rend your garments, unbelieving miscreant; from the high dignity of the priestly chair exhibit your hypocritical horror; affect to be scandalized at this pretended blasphemy; declare the speaker to be deserving of death; send into prison and disgrace the Son of God. It is He who stands before you. Little do you think that your very hypocritical zeal, your cruel and unjust action in this hour, is to serve as a support and defense of the Christian faith till the end of time. Thus it hath been pleasing to the decrees of eternal wisdom. Your own sacerdotal robe which you have just torn in twain is a prophetic sign that the priesthood of the Old Testament hath passed away forever, and that the veritable high "priest forever," Jesus Christ, is about to enter into the sanctuary.

4. JESUS IS DERIDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

After Christ had received this adverse judgment, the officers of the council dispersed and went home, for it was already past midnight. Jesus, therefore, was given over to the mercy of the soldiers and watchmen belonging to the high-priest's department.

"Then the men who held Jesus bound mocked Him, spit in His face. They buffeted Him, and having covered His face, they struck Him with their fists, saying: Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee. And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him. And the servants of the high-priest smote Him with the palms of their hands."

5. PETER'S DENIAL

Whilst Jesus was enduring in silence and meekness these unparalleled indignities, insults, and tortures from the hands of His enemies, still another disgrace was added, wounding still more deeply His sorrowful heart. This time the sword was sent through His heart by the hand of a friend, the chosen apostle, Peter. The evangelists describe the denial of Christ by St. Peter as follows:

"Now when Peter was in the court below, a portress, one of the maid-servants of the high-priest, came, and when she had seen Peter sitting by the fire, warming himself, and had looked at him, she said: Art not thou also one of this man's

disciples? Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. This man also was with Him. But he denied before them all, saying: I am not one of His disciples. Woman, I know Him not. I neither know nor understand what thou sayest. And he went forth before the court, and the cock crew.

“As he went out of the gate, another maid saw him, and she saith to them that were there: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. They said therefore to him: Art not thou also one of His disciples? And after a little while another seeing him, said: Thou also art one of them. But Peter denied again with an oath, and said: I am not; I do not know the man.

“After the space, as it were, of another hour, another man affirmed it, saying: Of a truth this man was also with Him, for he is a Galilean. And they that stood by came and said to Peter: Surely, thou also art one of them. Thou art a Galilean, for even thy speech doth discover thee. One of the servants of the high-priest, a kinsman to him whose ear Peter cut off, said to him: Did I not see thee in the garden with Him? Again therefore Peter denied, and he began to curse and to swear: Man, I know not what thou sayest. I know not this man of whom you speak. And immediately, as he was yet speaking, the cock crew again.

“And the Lord, turning, looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as He had said: Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice; and going out, he wept bitterly.”

In truth, Peter had good cause to weep bitterly, to shed bitter tears of remorse and contrition. For, as the gospel so impressively expresses it, he had denied Jesus before all; he had denied his Lord by dissimulation, denied Him by a lie, by repeated lies, and by a solemn sworn assertion of falsehood. But his repentance was a real and practical penance—a repentance of the very heart. “Peter went out,” that is, he left the occasion of sin, fled from further temptation, from the scene of his fall, and he “wept bitterly.” His penance was a lasting penance; for during the rest of his life he never ceased to bewail his unfaithfulness, and to repeat with David: “For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE HIGH COURT SITS IN JUDGMENT ON JESUS THE DESPAIR OF JUDAS

(GOOD FRIDAY)

Matt. xxvii. 1-10; Mark xv. 1; Luke xxii. 66 to xxiii. 1

“AND straightway, in the morning, as soon as it was day, the ancients of the people and the chief-priests and scribes met together, took counsel that they might put Jesus to death, and they brought Him before their council, saying: If thou be Christ, tell us. And He replied: If I should tell you, you would not believe Me; and if I ask you, you will not answer Me, nor dismiss Me. But hereafter the Son of man shall be sitting at the right hand of the power of God. They all then said: Art Thou therefore the Son of God? Who said: You say it, for I am. But they said: What need we any further testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from His own mouth.

“And the whole multitude of them rising up, brought Him bound, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor.”

To all intents and purposes, the high-priests and elders of the people had already at their meeting on the previous evening, pronounced sentence of death on our Saviour. But as, according to the rules of the high-council, a sentence pronounced on a previous evening could not be legally carried out, they reassembled on the following morning very early, in full attendance, intent, not upon questioning the justice of their previous action, or of reconsidering the sentence, but simply to confirm legally and formally their rash and unjust proceedings of the night before. Caiphas, full of pride and self-righteousness, haughtily ascends his throne to examine the pure and holy Son of God, and at once Jesus is beset on all sides with crowds of witnesses who hurl a shower of false charges against His guiltless person. They strive with cunning and mean artfulness to entrap divine Wisdom in His speech, to extort from Him but one word for which they might condemn Him.

“Then Judas who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief-priests and the ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of

silver in the temple, he departed; and went and hanged himself with a halter."

He was an avaricious miser till the end of his life. All his concern was about the thirty pieces of silver, and he hands them over to the temple. About his soul, he has no concern, for he hands it over to the devil.

"But the chief-priests having taken the pieces of silver, said: It is not lawful to put them into the corbona, because it is the price of blood. And after they had consulted together, they bought with them the potter's field, to be a burying-place for strangers. For this cause, that field was called Haceldama, that is, the field of blood, even to this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they prized of the children of Israel. And they gave them unto the potter's field, as the Lord appointed."

What hypocrisy on the part of the high-priests! The holy doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, lashes them severely in the following words: "What hypocrites! They scruple to put the blood-money into the treasury of the temple, but they feared not to pour out the innocent blood itself on their own heads." After returning his ill-gotten money, Judas hurried out of the city into Gehenna, or the valley of curses, south of the city, where he hanged himself on the limb of a fig-tree. The Acts of the Apostles add: "He burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

Peter and Judas had both sinned against their Lord and Master, but the subsequent conduct and fate of each were as far different as heaven from earth. Peter turns his eyes to his Redeemer and encounters a compassionate look of forgiveness. Judas bends his steps to the enemies of Christ, the high-priests, and meets with but heartless indifference. Peter recognizes the enormity of his crime, but as his intellect is unclouded, and his faith still alive, he understands, to his consolation, that the mercy of his Redeemer is infinitely greater. The mind of Judas, on the contrary, is obscured by long-continued wickedness, and the night of dark despair has settled down on his soul. Peter humbles himself and is willing to bear the contempt of his fellow-apostles, the privation of his previous distinction, the consequences and penalties of his sin, and casts himself in penitent resignation into the arms of

God. Judas, in his pride and folly, can not bear the reproaches of the disciples, the contempt of the world, nor the qualms of his conscience; he despairs, and hangs himself.

CHAPTER XV

JESUS BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

(GOOD FRIDAY)

Matt. xxvii. 11-14; Mark xv. 2-5; Luke xxiii. 3-12; John xviii. 28-38

1. HOW THE CHURCH KEEPS GOOD FRIDAY

SAD and solemn is the aspect of the holy spouse of Christ on the anniversary day of His suffering and death.

In plaintive tones she sings: "There is no beauty in Him nor comeliness: He hath become despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, and His look was, as it were, hidden as if for shame. Surely, He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; by His bruises we were healed. Oh, all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow. Blessed be the standard by which truth and justice were restored to the world. Come, let us fall down and worship and weep before the Lord, for by His wounds we have been healed."

On these and other prophetic words of the Old Testament, the Church founds her solemn service of Good Friday, with all its beautiful, impressive, and significant ceremonies. In reparation to her divine Spouse, for the ignominy heaped upon Him on this day by the fickle Pilate, by the malicious Herod and the bloodthirsty Jews, the Church wishes to offer to Jesus the atoning sacrifice of her most reverent homage, her most ardent love and heartfelt sympathy. Hence she opens divine service on Good Friday, by an act of the most profound reverence—the officiating priest and all his attendants prostrating themselves at the foot of the altar, where, with faces touching the earth, they dwell for several minutes in silent sorrow upon the mystery of Christ's abasement on Calvary. After the reading of a few lessons and prayers, the Passion or history of the sufferings and death of Christ is chanted according to the gospel of St. John. This is followed by a lengthy series of public solemn prayers for persons of every condition in the Church, for persons preparing to enter the

Church, for heretics and schismatics, and finally, for Jews and pagans. In order to show the special earnestness with which the Church, on this day, prays for friends and enemies, each prayer is preceded by a genuflection,¹ except in the case of the prayers for the Jews. Here the bending of the knee is omitted, in order to express our dislike and disapprobation for their mockery of the Saviour, when they bent the knee before Him in derision.

After the last prayer, the solemn unveiling and adoration of the cross take place. This venerable ensign of our salvation has stood veiled upon our altars since Passion Sunday, and now, on Good Friday, it is uncovered with the solemn chant, "*Ecce lignum crucis,*" etc., "Behold the wood of the cross, on which has hung the Salvation of the world; come, let us adore it," that is to say, let us venerate it for His sake who redeemed us upon it.

This unveiling is done gradually at three different stages, in order to show that God prepared our redemption, through the sufferings and death of Christ, gradually; and that each of the three divine persons participated in the great work. The cross is then placed upon the altar-steps, and the celebrant, with his attendants and the assembled faithful, makes a triple adoration, while the choir chants the *Improperia*—those plaintive lamentations and reproaches in which the Saviour charges the Jews and mankind generally with a want of gratitude to Himself.

Mass is not celebrated on Good Friday; for, on that day, when all minds and hearts are occupied with the bleeding sacrifice of the cross, the bloodless sacrifice remains unoffered. The second host, consecrated at the mass of Holy Thursday, is elevated for a brief adoration and then consumed by the priest. But this function is not the mass, for there is no consecration. The celebrating priest, after purifying the chalice, then, together with the rest of the clergy, withdraws from the altar in profound silence. The few burning tapers are extinguished, and all is left in gloom and desolation.

But let us return to the history of our beloved Saviour's passion.

2. JESUS IS TRIED BEFORE PILATE

"Then they led Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall. And it was morning; and they went not into the hall that

¹*Flectamus genua*, let us bend the knee. *Levate*, rise up.

they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch. Pilate therefore went out to them, and said: What accusation bring you against this man? They answered and said to him: If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee. Pilate therefore said to them: Take you Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said to him: It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He said signifying what death He should die.¹

“But they began to accuse Him, saying: We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He is Christ the king.

“Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus. And Jesus stood before Pilate, and the governor asked Him, saying: Art Thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayst thou this of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation and the chief-priests have delivered Thee up to me. What hast Thou done? Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to Him: Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. Pilate saith to Him: What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews.

“And he said to the chief-priests and to the people: I find no cause in this man. And when Jesus was accused by the chief-priests and ancients in many things, He answered nothing. Pilate again asked Him, saying: Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee? Answerest Thou nothing? But Jesus still answered nothing to any word, so that Pilate the governor wondered very much. But they were more earnest, saying: He stirreth up the people, teaching all over Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

We see that our divine Master was brought three times before Pilate: first, when His persecutors led Him from the high-priest's palace to the officers of the governor; a second time, when He was brought back from the court of Herod; and lastly, just after His scourging. At the first examina-

¹Namely by the hands of pagans, such as the Roman soldiers were.

tion, Pilate openly declared the innocence of Christ; at the second, he decided to have Him scourged, although innocent; at the third hearing, he yielded to the insatiable wishes of the Jews and handed Him over to be crucified.

And now our almighty and all-holy Lord of heaven and earth, with His hands bound fast together, His body quivering with pain, weakness, and abuse; His divine countenance haggard and sad with fatigue, loss of rest, and a deep sense of His wrongs, stood, like a guilty and abandoned culprit, before a heathen judge. All around and behind Him, in the open square, surged in turbulent and angry clamor for His blood, a miscellaneous city-mob—some residents of Jerusalem, others strangers who had come in from far and wide, on the occasion of the festival of the great passover. Scattered among them might be seen many of the scribes and Pharisees who had come with the determination to influence the multitude against Jesus, to hound on the evil-disposed, and to intimidate the few more moderate ones who might be inclined to speak or act in His favor. Foremost in the crowd stood the chief-priests and the prominent members of the high-council preferring to Pilate, who stood upon the marble-balcony, three special charges against Jesus: namely, of stirring up the people by teaching false doctrines, forbidding the payment of taxes to Cæsar, and of wishing to make Himself king. What hypocrites! They themselves knew that each and every one of these charges was untrue. But let us turn our attention awhile from this disgusting crowd, and meditate upon two expressions uttered at this first sham trial of Jesus. One of them came from His own lips, the other is Pilate's.

“I am a king; for this was I born. My kingdom is not of this world.” The four evangelists are all agreed and very emphatic in their statements concerning the declaration of Christ to the Roman governor, that He was a king. Yes, He was a king, even in His then degraded condition, and the only real and true King of all men. For the Father had given Him a threefold royal authority: namely, dominion over the minds of men by truth, dominion over the wills of men by precept or command, and dominion over the souls of men by divine grace. But this dominion is not like that of ordinary princes, a dominion of force, for the kingdom of Christ is not of this world. The Prince who founded the kingdom, the objects to be attained, the goods entrusted to it, and the guardians who preside over it, are not of this world,



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but from above. And yet, although not *of* this world, the kingdom of Christ is *for* the world and in the world; that is, for all men, great and little, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, sinners and saints. It is *for* them and they must obey its laws, listen to its truths, and try to deserve and acquire its graces, if they wish to prosper, whether in this world or in the next. It is, therefore, extremely absurd and unjust for the godless portion of society to attempt to justify their iniquitous proceedings against the Church, their robberies and oppression, by misinterpreting the text of Scripture, and saying: "The Church is not of this world; it is spiritual, superhuman, and therefore needs not temporal possessions, requires no freedom, enjoys no rights." Is it not as absurd to say that a man requires neither shelter, food, nor raiment, because, as regards his immortal soul, he is not of this earth, but comes directly from the hand of God? Such arguments are false and foolish. But we need not wonder. The Son of God himself came from heaven, and behold! the rulers of the earth, the scribes and the Pharisees looked upon Him as a stranger on the earth who had no rights. They deprived Him of His clothing, of His freedom, of His very life. Why should it fare otherwise with the followers of that Christ?

Again, observe the words of Pilate: "What is truth?" As if, unbelieving heathen that he was, he would have said: "Poor fool, why trouble yourself to find out the truth? Why bring upon yourself so many perils, so much hatred and opposition in your endeavor to make known the truth to men? What is truth? Where is it to be found? Nowhere on earth. For here below all is doubt, error, and fiction. The truly wise man is he who does not bother himself about truth, who enjoys life, who gives himself up without restraint to the gratification of every momentary pleasure." What a sad and miserable avowal! Paganism makes use of Pilate's lips to acknowledge its own impotency to learn or to hold the truth. It confesses the dismal truth that all the efforts of its greatest, wisest, and most learned philosophers, have led mankind to nothing but falsehood. It acknowledges itself unable to solve the awfully important problem concerning the soul of man. "What is truth?" Observe, too, that paganism makes this declaration of its own inefficiency and insufficiency, on the very day on which mankind is to be restored to the truth and renewed in grace by the atoning sacrifice of the cross.

But, alas! of this great mystery neither Pilate nor Herod has any understanding. Although they had been life-long enemies, they become fast friends when opposing the very source of truth and persecuting its author. Pilate is in doubt about the truth; Herod, as we shall see from the following text, despised and mocked it.

3. JESUS BEFORE HEROD. HE IS DERIDED THE SECOND TIME

“Pilate, hearing Galilee, asked if the man were of Galilee; and when he understood that He was of Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days. Herod, seeing Jesus, he was very glad; for he was desirous of a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things of Him, and he hoped to see some sign wrought by Him; and he questioned Him many words, but Jesus answered him nothing. The chief-priests and scribes stood by earnestly accusing Him. Herod, with his army, set Him at naught and mocked Him, and putting on Him a white garment, he sent Him back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate were made friends that same day; for before they were enemies to one another.”

How gloomy the friendship of the godless who reject Jesus! How dismal and unnatural the conspiracy between Jews and infidels against the Anointed and His Church! The pagan governor, having often rashly invaded the jurisdiction of the Hebrew prince, avails himself of this opportunity to soothe the angry Herod, by flattering his vanity, pride, and curiosity, in the delivering of Jesus into his custody. As has been already stated, this Herod Antipas was the son of the child-slayer, and a frivolous, avaricious, unchaste, and vicious man. He lived in open adultery with his brother’s wife, had put John the Baptist to death, and had frequently sought the life of Jesus. Before this hypocrite, murderer, and adulterer, must Jesus now take His stand and defend Himself against the calumnies of the chief-priests.

But He holds His peace, for He deems Herod unworthy of one word of reply. Wherefore this silence? In the first place, it is a well-merited rebuke to Herod for his murder of the last and greatest of prophets, and for his licentiousness and hypocrisy; for he was a thousand times more undeserving than Pilate to hear one word from the pure lips of the Redeemer. In the second place, the charges of the chief-priests were so contradictory, absurd, and palpably false, that they

really deserved no reply. In the third place, Jesus knew that it was impossible to justify Himself before such a judge, or to repel the charges of His unscrupulous accusers. Finally, in the fourth place, our merciful Redeemer wished to atone for the vain and false self-justification of men, as well as for the false oaths and other perjuries of the godless, and to obtain for such sinners the grace of repentance.

The persistent silence of Jesus casts Herod into a fit of unbridled anger. He feels himself rebuked and put to shame. Concealing his bad temper, he seeks to vent his spite by inciting his soldiers to mock Jesus. "Then Herod and his soldiers mocked Him." A long white garment,¹ such as was usually worn in eastern lands by poor idiots, was brought out and placed upon Christ. Herod, by this proceeding, wished to intimate to Pilate: "You see this fool who plotted to make himself king, and who, because his ignorant and thoughtless followers and the common people run after Him, imagined Himself to be of vast importance. But before educated people, such as myself and the chief-priests, His wisdom is blown to the winds, His power is nowhere, and He is unable to answer a word. There He stands, silent and confused, like a stupid idiot."

CHAPTER XVI

BARABBAS PREFERRED BY THE JEWS TO JESUS. JESUS DELIVERED UP BY PILATE TO BE SCOURGED, MOCKED, AND CRUCIFIED

Matt. xxviii 15-30; Mark xv. 6-19; Luke xxiii. 13-25; John xviii. 39 to xix. 16

1. PILATE WOULD LIKE TO LIBERATE JESUS. BARABBAS IS LIBERATED

"PILATE, calling together the chief-priests and the magistrates and the people, said to them: You have presented unto me this man, as one that perverteth the people, and behold, I having examined Him before you, find no cause in Him in

¹This white garment put upon our Saviour at his second mocking must not be confounded with the purple mantle thrown by the soldiers on His person at the third and fourth mockery. Many commentators hold that this white garment was what was usually the candidate's mantle, as worn by those among the Romans who sought high honors. Herod, by thus clothing Jesus and sending him back to Pilate, seemed to say: "Behold, friend Pilate, the presumptuous fool who would fain place himself above both of us, by trying to have himself proclaimed king of Judea and Galilee."

those things wherein you accuse Him. No, nor Herod neither; for I sent you to him, and behold, nothing worthy of death is done to Him. I will chastise Him therefore and release Him.

“Now upon the solemn festival day, the governor was accustomed of necessity to release to the people one prisoner whom they would. And he had then a notorious prisoner that was called Barabbas, a robber, who was put in prison with some seditious men, who in the sedition had committed murder.

“The multitude, therefore, being gathered together, they began to desire, as he had ever done to them. Pilate answering, saith to the multitude: You have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Pasch; will you therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? For he knew that the chief-priests had delivered Him up out of envy.

“And as he was sitting on the judgment-seat, his wife¹ sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man. For I have suffered many things this day in a dream on His account.

“But the chief-priests and ancients moved the people that he would rather release Barabbas to them and destroy Jesus. And the governor answering, said to them: Whether of the two will you have to be released unto you? But the whole multitude together cried out, saying: Not this man, but Barabbas. Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.

“And Pilate again answering, saith to them, desiring to release Jesus: What will you, then, that I do to the King of the Jews, who is called Christ? But they again cried out: Crucify Him, crucify Him.

“Pilate saith to them a third time: Why, what evil hath this man done? I find no cause of death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go. But they cried out the more with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified, and their voices prevailed; and they cried the more, Away with Him; crucify Him.”

Alas, my dearly beloved Lord and Redeemer, how thy whole human nature must have shuddered, on hearing from the

¹According to tradition, Pilate's wife's name was Claudia Procula. It is believed by many that, after the resurrection of Christ, she embraced Christianity and died in the odor of sanctity.

hoarse throats of the infuriated mob that dreadful cry: "Crucify Him! Away with Him; crucify Him!" To death! to the most excruciating death, to the death of the slave and the malefactor. This is the return made to Thee by an ungrateful people for all Thy love and goodness, virtue, and benefits. But still more afflicting to Thy heart than even this cry, were the unfeeling words of the Jewish people: "Away with Jesus, and release unto us Barabbas!" With this unmitigated criminal and disturber of the peace, with a murderer, the perverse people have some sympathy; they manifest even affection for him, and beg to have him for their pass-over gift from the governor. But Thee, O Lord, their Friend and Saviour, they indignantly reject. A choice is offered to them, and they do choose, but, alas! they choose Barabbas in preference to Thee; to Thee who art eternal excellence, admirable love and mercy. What incomprehensible, accursed blindness of heart!

"Away with Him and release unto us Barabbas!" These words contain and express both the mystery of the deepest degradation and the astounding mystery of divine mercy.

The very day on which the Jewish people uttered these dreadful words, they were commemorating their delivery from Egyptian bondage—it was the feast of the Passover. On this account, and also because, according to an old and well-known tradition among them, it was to be on this feast that their second deliverance was to be effected by the promised Messiah, it had long been customary to liberate each year, on the return of the festival, some prisoner. To-day, then, Barabbas the murderer is set free. And on this day must Christ die. Christian reader, do you discern the mystery? This Barabbas is a striking figure of mankind, who was on this day redeemed in the blood of Christ. Man who, by the commission of sin, had rebelled against the Most High; who, by depriving Himself of supernatural life, had become a murderer, he is made free, while, in his place, Jesus is made to bear his guilt and suffer his punishment.

2. JESUS IS SCOURGED, CROWNED WITH THORNS, AND DERIDED THE THIRD TIME IN THE OUTER COURT OF THE PALACE

Let us proceed now to the consideration of the cruel scourging, the crowning of thorns, and the thrice-repeated derision inflicted upon our adorable Saviour, as He stands in silent meekness in the court of the governor's palace.

“Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers plating a crown of thorns, put it upon His head; and they put on Him a purple garment.¹ And they came to Him and said: Hail, King of the Jews, and they gave Him some blows (*Jno.* xix. 1-3).

Jesus Christ, tied fast to the pillar, the whole of the upper portion of His sacred person exposed to the cruel gaze of the mob, and so unmercifully lashed by scourges in the hands of six or eight soldiers that His precious blood flows in warm streams to the earth, and skin and flesh become one undistinguishable mass, is the dread picture now before our thoughts. Look at it, and behold the atonement made for your sins of the flesh, for the effeminacy, luxury, and lust of men! Ah, how cruelly is the prophetic lamentation of David fulfilled, “The wicked have wrought” (plowed or furrowed) “on my back; they have lengthened their iniquity!” (*Ps.* cxxvii.). How fully verified the words of the prophet *Isaias*, “From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein: wounds and bruises and swelling sores: they are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil” (*Isaias* i. 6).

Pilate had sentenced Jesus to be scourged only. But the soldiers, who were instigated and prompted by the Pharisees and the Jewish priests, would not be satisfied; and now, even now, they would not grant their gasping victim one moment’s relief, or a chance to regain His exhausted breath. True, the executioners who did the scourging are completely worn out, but who can count the numbers of those who are panting to

¹As the holy sacrifice of the mass is the bloodless renewal of the sacrifice on the cross, and the priest ministering at the altar being the representative of the divine-human High-priest, Jesus Christ, therefore, the priest, when celebrating Mass, wears upon his person the insignia of his suffering Lord. The Amice, or white linen cloth, with which, in olden times, the priest used to cover his head, but which he now puts around his neck and shoulders, is in memory of the cloth in which the Jews enveloped the head of Jesus in the court of Caiphas. The long white alb is worn in remembrance of the white garment put on our Lord in mockery when before Herod. The cincture or girdle, together with the stole and maniple, remind us of the cords with which his persecutors tied the body, hands, and neck of Christ. The chasuble corresponds to the purple garment, the biretta to the crown of thorns, and the crosier in the hand of the bishop to the scepter placed in our Saviour’s hand. It is thus that the Church obeys, in every particular detail, the precept of her divine Founder: “This do ye for the commemoration of me; for, as often as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord” [1 Cor. xi].

supply their places, and to rival each other in venting their diabolical hatred against Jesus?

In the vicinity of Jerusalem, there grows a species of thorny shrub, whose branches are provided with hard, sharp thorns about two inches in length, and which are to this day called Christ's thorn (*spina Christi*). Of these the inhuman creatures platted a crown, and pressed it forcibly upon the head, brow, and temples of Jesus. What an unheard-of cruelty! Such infliction had never been done, never been known in the history of inhumanity until that hour. And why was this new species of suffering undergone by our Lord? The prediction of the Canticle had to be verified: "Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem, wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals" (*Cantic.* iii. 11). For Christ is the real Solomon, divine Wisdom itself. On the day when He signed and sealed His eternal covenant with the human race, His faithless mother, the Jewish synagogue, crowned Him with a crown of thorns. And again, why this strange manner of suffering? Alas for the sins of our intellect!—to atone for future pride and rebellion against faith. Moreover, our beloved thorn-crowned Saviour wished to show forth His own kingly dignity and the fate of His kingdom on earth. He is a king of suffering, whose subjects must hold themselves in readiness to suffer affliction and even death, as it is written: "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution" (2 *Tim.* iii. 12). Why this infliction on our Saviour's brow? In order to atone for our many sins of thought, especially of proud and rebellious thought. Why again, this mode of suffering? Alas! are not many of the spiritual and temporal miseries of the human race plainly traceable to the devastating wars which are waged mostly for the sake of an earthly crown? Our divine Saviour, when He felt the thorny crown penetrating His sacred brow on the great day of atonement, foresaw the loss of human life, the loss of happiness, the loss of innumerable souls, all effected through wars waged in defense of paltry crowns, and in the bitterness of His anguish He suffered and atoned therefor.

3. "ECCE HOMO:" "BEHOLD THE MAN"

When the soldiery conducted the lacerated, bleeding, and thorn-crowned Saviour into Pilate's presence, he was shocked and frightened at the result of his orders.

"Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith to them: Be-

hold I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him. (Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.) And he saith to them: Behold the Man. When the chief-priests therefore and the servants had seen Him, they cried out, saying: Crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith to them: Take Him you, and crucify Him; for I find no cause in Him. The Jews answered him: We have a law, and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again: and he said to Jesus: Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith to Him; Speakest Thou not to me? knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee? Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that hath delivered Me to thee, hath the greater sin."

Observe, even Pilate was himself frightened when he heard the awful words, "Son of God." With a shudder, he thought, "What if this victim, whom I have ordered to be maltreated, should possibly be a superior being, some divine personage?"

4. PILATE SENTENCES JESUS TO BE CRUCIFIED. PILATE'S CULPABILITY

"And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend; for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar. Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the parasceve of the Pasch, about the sixth hour, and he saith to the Jews: Behold your king! But they cried out: Away with Him! away with Him! crucify Him! Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your king? The chief-priests answered: We have no king but Cæsar. And Pilate, seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water, washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it. And the whole people, answering, said: His blood be upon us, and upon our children." (*Matt.* xxvii. 24.)

"And so Pilate, being willing to satisfy the people, gave

sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him who for murder and sedition had been cast into prison, Barabbas, whom they had desired; but he delivered up Jesus, whom he had scourged, to be crucified." (*Mark and Luke.*)

And now the judicial sentence has been pronounced, and the Holy of Holies is sentenced by the mouth of Pilate to be put to death, like a common malefactor. The inconstancy of the Jewish people, the avarice of the traitor Judas, the craft of the Pharisees, the blind incredulity of the Scribes, the blood-thirsty hatred of the chief priests, and the cowardly selfishness and political cunning of the pagan governor, all these culminated in the judicial sentence of Pilate. But, inconceivable miracle! At the same moment, eternal mercy speaks by the tongue of this same Pilate. For, the Lord had placed upon His well-beloved Son all our iniquities. Now, in order that the sentence of everlasting death, under which mankind had fallen by the sin of their first father, Adam, might be repealed and annulled, the second Adam, and first father of a spiritual humanity, permits the awful sentence of Pilate to come upon His divine head.

Pilate would rather not have pronounced this sentence, and was anxious to set Jesus at liberty. With this view he had publicly and solemnly declared that he could discover no guilt in the prisoner accused. With the same intent, too, he had placed the criminal Barabbas side by side with Jesus, hoping that in choosing between two such different persons, the Jewish people would certainly decide in favor of the innocent party. With the same view he had presented Jesus to them immediately after the dreadful scourging, and endeavored to excite their sympathy by calling their attention to the lacerated person of their victim. With the same object in view, he had, by washing his hands publicly, expressed his disapprobation of the proceeding. But all these feeble and indecisive efforts do not exculpate him, nor even mitigate the iniquity of his sentence.

Pilate, though fully convinced of Christ's innocence, and as representative of the Roman emperor, having full power to liberate Him, was strongly inclined, on account of his hatred to the Pharisees, to save the life of Jesus. But yet, in his cunning political adroitness, he sends this just man off to Herod. Yet, he delivers Him up to the cruel scourging. Yet, he finally yields to the sanguinary demands of the chief priests

and permits Him to be crucified. Alas! Pilate is one of those unhappy beings, who under pretense of honesty, of philanthropy and of rational compliance, sacrifice to their own selfish ends the noblest and holiest principles. How many warnings he had received! The wonderful majesty of Christ's presence filled him with involuntary reverence. His own conscience told him that this was a just man. His devout wife warned him not to pronounce the unjust sentence, basing her admonition on a vision seen in a dream; to which circumstance the pagan Romans paid the greatest attention, considering such a dream to be the expression of a divine oracle. Yes, even the very charge made by the chief-priests, that Christ made Himself the Son of God, awoke a momentary warning in his heart. Yet, the unhappy governor rejected all these salutary admonitions, and for no other motive than not to lose the good-will of the emperor. Hence Pilate's end was not unlike that of Judas. He afterward fell into despair, and as St. Eusebius informs us, died the death of a suicide.

We have now two very important sayings to consider: the saying of the chief-priests, and that of the whole Jewish people. "We have no king but Cæsar;" thus shouted, in the name of the Jewish people, their chiefs and leaders. This was a remarkable occurrence; for these people thus publicly confessed that the scepter had forever departed from Judah, and that a foreign king reigned over Israel. Thus they unwittingly admitted that the prophecy of the dying patriarch Jacob had been fulfilled, and that the time for the coming of the Messiah had arrived. But this Messiah, the whole Jewish people, in the perverse blindness of their hearts and heads, rejected when they shouted: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." What a horrible inheritance was brought down, by this hideous cry, upon their children and their children's children! It was, indeed, a frightful prayer, and one which, as a prophecy of a lasting curse, has been painfully granted by heaven for centuries, and will continue so till the end of time.

5. JESUS IS DERIDED THE FOURTH TIME

"Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band, and stripping Him, they (again) put a scarlet cloak about Him. And plating a crown of thorns they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and bowing the knee before Him, they

mocked Him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews! And spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His head." (*Matt. xxvii.*)

Such were the cruel amusements of the soldiers, and such the hard treatment of our blessed Lord, while others were preparing the cross on which the Son of Man was to die.

CHAPTER XVII

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Matt. xxvii. 31, 32; Mark xv. 20, 21; Luke xxiii. 26-32; John xix. 16-18

1. JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

“AND they took Jesus, and after they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own garments on Him and led Him away, to crucify Him. And bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew, Golgotha.”

When our blessed Lord's eyes first fell upon the cross, His human nature shuddered and recoiled for an instant. But remembering the copious streams of supernatural grace which would gush forth from this dry wood, and flow for centuries among men, His soul was gladdened, and with deep emotion He clasped the cross in His arms, kissed it, laid it upon His lacerated shoulders, and the sad and solemn procession moved toward the gate of the city. What a weird and dismal procession, even for the streets of this unhappy city! A yelling mob of men, curious women, thoughtless children, exulting enemies, jealous priests, jeering Pharisees, coarse soldiers, and in their midst the Lamb of God tottering under the weight of a rough and heavy cross. Three times along the way, tradition says, our Lord fell to the ground under His heavy burden, and each time He was violently raised again to His feet by His unfeeling executioners, who, with loud laugh and rude oath, goaded Him forward to the place of death.

2. HE MEETS HIS AFFLICTED MOTHER

Who can conceive the agony of His beloved and loving mother on seeing her tenderly-cherished child, her adorable

Lord and God, thus dishonored and abused. Christian legends relate, that immediately after the capture of Jesus in the garden, several of the apostles, particularly St. John, hastened to Bethania to break the news to the Blessed Virgin and other friends. The holy Mother, who had anticipated this affliction, besought St. John to accompany her to Jerusalem, that she might see her deserted and desolate suffering son, be near Him, and perhaps find an opportunity to offer Him some little relief, or at least some words of sympathy and encouragement. Oh! what must have been the thoughts and feelings of this holy couple as they hurried, side by side, from Bethania, over the brook Cedron, and up the steep hill into Jerusalem! And when after traversing, in breathless haste, the intervening streets, they reached the palace of Caiphas, what a dreadful state of mind was that of the grief-stricken and frightened Mary, as she heard within the palace the wild laughter and the cruel mockeries with which the soldiers and servants taunted the innocent Jesus. Many pious writers are of the opinion that Mary, although repeatedly pushed violently back by the officers, succeeded in keeping near her dear son, whom she accompanied on His painful journey from the high-priest's dwelling to the house of Pilate, and to Herod's court, and thus became a witness of His ill-treatment and horrible indignities. Alas! dearest Mother, how thy heart must have wildly throbbled with anguish, and terror, and indignation, at the appalling sight before thee! Oh! what must have been thy feelings, when, at last, on the road to Calvary thou didst find an opportunity to get near to Jesus, to fall upon His neck and clasp Him once more, yet living, in thy sacred arms!

3. SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS TO CARRY THE CROSS

“And as they led Him away,” His strength failed Him, and “they found a man of Cyrene, who passed by, coming out of the country, named Simon, the father of Alexander and of Rufus. Him they forced to take up His cross; and they laid” it “upon him to carry after Jesus.”

The officers adopted this measure, not out of compassion for Jesus, but because they perceived that He was fast losing the little strength left in Him after His scourging and other ill-treatment, and they began to fear that He might die on the way, and thus escape crucifixion. This Simon of Cyrene was one of the humblest class of people, a gardener, who came

every spring to Jerusalem for employment, and even he shrank from the carrying of the cross, for it was always the work of the lowest malefactors, and besides it was covered with the blood of Jesus.

4. VERONICA AND THE SORROWING WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

“And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days shall come wherein they will say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not born, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry? And there were also two others, malefactors, led with Him, to be put to death.”

Among the tender-hearted women who pushed their way through the crowd to be near Jesus, and to offer Him their sympathy, was one in particular, named Veronica, of whom reliable tradition relates a very touching incident. She was a lady of wealth and position, whose name was Seraphia, and lived in a house on a street through which Jesus was to pass on His way to Calvary. Seeing Him, as He drew near, weak and tottering, covered with perspiration and blood, her heart was touched with compassion. She hastened into the street, forced her way through the wild crowd, and, undismayed by the threats of the officers, came before Jesus, and falling on her knees, offered Him a handkerchief, saying: Be pleased, O Lord, to wipe Thy suffering face with the handkerchief of Thy unworthy handmaid. Jesus, full of gratitude, looked benignantly at the tender-hearted woman, took the cloth and applied it to His face, and, much refreshed and relieved, handed it back to Seraphia. He passed on, and she re-entered her dwelling, when, lo! a miracle. On looking at the handkerchief, she saw imprinted upon it the likeness of the divine countenance. Thus did our Lord repay the kindness of His servant. Seraphia became a Christian, taking the name of Veronica.¹ The miraculous impression of the face of Jesus passed into the hands of Pope Clement, and has since remained one of the most cherished relics of the Church.

¹From the two words *vera* and *icon*; meaning true image.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CRUCIFIXION

Matt. xxvii. 33-43; Mark xv. 22-32; Luke xxiii. 33-38; John xix. 18-24

1. JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS. THE SOLDIERS DIVIDE HIS GARMENTS AMONG THEMSELVES

JESUS was nailed to the cross! Have you ever seriously inquired, Christian reader, why our Lord chose death by crucifixion, and not by beheading, stoning, or some other mode? The manner of our Saviour's death, as well as all other circumstances connected with His life upon earth, and especially with His holy passion, has a special and mysterious signification. In the first place, as it was from the wood of a tree in Eden, that death had its rise, it was becoming that new and regenerate life should proceed from the wood of the cross. As the evil spirit had overcome our first father by the fruit of a tree, he should now be himself overcome by our second Father, by the tree of the cross. Secondly, our Lord had taken upon Himself our curse of sin, in order to free us from that curse; hence He chose to die the death of the accursed. As St. Athanasius observes, He chose the death on the cross; for it is written in the fifth book of Moses: "He is accursed of God that hangeth on a tree." Thirdly, Jesus was to be the king of martyrs, and as such, wished to combine in His death all the various sufferings of martyrdom, and hence chose the most excruciating of all martyrdoms, in the death on the cross. Finally, it was becoming that the high-priest and victim of the New Testament should, like the victims in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, be elevated on high, when offered up to divine justice; that He should perform His sacrifice while hanging between heaven and earth, for by it heaven and earth were to be re-united; and that He should expire with outstretched arms in order to embrace all the redeemed.

Such were the decrees of divine mercy, which even the malice of the Jewish priests and Pharisees was instrumental in carrying out to the letter. For these people, in their diabolical hatred for Jesus, had but one wish, and that was to put Him out of the world by the most dishonorable and torturing death, as is written in the book of Wisdom: "We will condemn Him to the most ignominious death" They knew that the Romans punished rebels and those who found fault with Roman juris-

diction, by crucifixion, and hence these enemies of our Lord urged strenuously and chiefly against Him charges of disloyalty to the emperor of Rome; saying that He wished to make Himself king, and incited the passions of the people for that object. Barabbas, the rebel, was to have been crucified, but the wicked Jews must substitute Jesus, and hence they clamor vociferously and determinedly, Crucify Him! crucify the Nazarene, and release Barabbas! Let us listen to the words of the evangelists:

“And they bring Jesus into the place called Golgotha, which being interpreted, is the place of Calvary. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh and gall, and when He had tasted, He would not drink. There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, robbers, one on the right and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith: And with the wicked He was reputed.”

“The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified Him, took His garments (and they made four parts: to every soldier a part), and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it whose it shall be. That the Scripture might be fulfilled, saying: They have parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they have cast lot. And the soldiers indeed did these things, and sat down and watched Him.” It was about the third hour when they crucified Him.

Thus the prophecies of the Old Testament were all fulfilled, one after another, in Christ. Even that diabolical malice which would not permit His executioners to give Him the ordinary draught of drugged wine, usually administered on such occasions to partly refresh and partly stupefy the sufferer, till they had first rendered it unpalatable by mixing vinegar and gall with it, had been foretold by the Psalmist: “And they gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

Another, and a more shameful indignity, was cast upon the Saviour, by the stealing of His clothing. And then the agony caused by this stripping of His garments! All His clothing had been pressed into His torn flesh, partly by the cords with which He was bound, and partly by the weight of the cross; and now that the wounds were all torn open again, the sufferings of the Saviour must have been appalling.

Then the soldiers seized Him, threw Him down violently upon the cross, stretched out His arms, and drove through His feet and hands, with dreadful violence, the nails which were to hold Him to the planks; as had been foretold by the prophet: They have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones. Who can conceive the awful pain which must have convulsed the entire frame of Jesus at each heavy blow of the hammer, and again at the rude, and jostling, and tedious uplifting of the cross itself!

2. THE INSCRIPTION ON THE CROSS. JESUS AGAIN DERIDED

“Pilate wrote also an inscription or title,” in large legible characters, according to the custom of the Romans, and put it upon the cross of Jesus, “over His head,” denoting the cause for which He suffered. “And it was written: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. This inscription many of the Jews read; because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city. The chief priests, therefore, of the Jews, said to Pilate: Write not the king of the Jews, but that he said, I am the king of the Jews. Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written.”

Admirable dispensation of Providence! The decree of the Eternal Father guides the very hand of the unjust judge to write in the inscription no other charge and no other cause of condemnation but that Jesus was really and truly the Messiah foretold by the prophets, as a Nazarene, and as king of the Jews. Of this inscription we are daily and hourly reminded by the four letters¹ which we see at the top of every crucifix. These remind us also of another mysterious inscription or hand-writing, alluded to by St. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians: “blotting out the hand-writing of the decree that was against us, he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross.” What is the meaning of this hand-writing? It is nothing more nor less than the sin-record of men, on which, equally through the particular undersigning of the sinner, rests the sins and iniquities of all mankind, and their well-deserved punishments stand recorded. Rejoice and

¹The four letters I. N. R. J. are the initial letters of the Latin words, Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaorum, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Pilate had this inscription written also in Greek and Hebrew, thus unwittingly giving testimony to the universal application of the sacrifice of the cross to East and West—to all nations,

be glad, O sinful humanity! This bill of indictment has been nailed to the cross, and cancelled by the saving blood of the high priest, Jesus Christ. Henceforward no single creature shall be lost on account of his sins, for if he be lost, it will be only because he failed to apply this saving blood to his soul, by faith, hope and obedience.

Look up, then, with gratitude and confidence to the great High-Priest on the cross. Consider how willingly He offers, in bleeding sacrifice to His heavenly Father for our sins, His divine-human life. Eternal justice is now vindicated, and the arms of the Eternal Father are once more open to receive humanity redeemed in Christ. O lamentable blindness of the people, culpable perversity of their leaders! Instead of surrounding the cross to repent, and to share in its blessings, they hurl still further insulting reproaches and blasphemies against the crucified Jesus.

“And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads, and saying: Vah, Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again, save Thyself; if Thou be the Son of God, save Thyself, coming down from the cross. Now the people stood looking on, and mocked Him. In like manner also the chief-priests, mocking, said with the Scribes and ancients, one to another: He saved others, Himself He can not save; if He be the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. Let Christ, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe. Let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the elect of God. He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He is pleased with Him; for He said, I am the Son of God. And the soldiers also made sport with Him, coming and offering Him vinegar, and saying: If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself. And the self-same thing the thieves also that were crucified with Him, reproached Him.”

CHAPTER XIX

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS

Matt. xxvii. 45-50; Mark xv. 33-37; Luke 23, 24, 39-46; John xix. 25-30

DURING the space of three long, tedious and dreadful hours, Jesus hung upon the cross, dying. And as we stand in silence by the side of this sad and dreary death-bed of our Saviour,

we should strive not to lose a syllable of the few final words that He will utter, before He breathes His last agonizing breath. With pious eagerness listen to the mysterious intercessory prayer, which the great High Priest, during these hours of sacrifice, sends up to His heavenly Father for His disciples and for all future Christians, for the entire church with her prelates and pastors, for His enemies of the hour, and for all persecutors in time to come. But who can or dare penetrate into these secret mysteries of Jesus' heart as it languished through its three hours' agony? In presence of this sublime sacrifice, where Jesus Christ is at once the high priest and the suffering, throbbing, dying victim, let us bow down in mingled sentiments of embarrassment and awe, of love and gratitude. Our dying Saviour wishes to impart to us as it were a taste of these unfathomable mysteries, when He pronounces these seven last words. Wondrous words they are, teeming with power to fortify us in our faith, to confirm our hope, and to inflame our love. Let us listen eagerly and attentively to these parting words of our dying Saviour, treasure them up carefully, bury them deeply and permanently in our heart of hearts. Our dying friend and Father is declaring His last will and testament. Listen!

1. "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO"

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
(*Luke* xxiii. 34.)

What a prayer at such a moment! Though the Redeemer has been racked and tortured, both in body and mind, to a degree beyond all conception, yet He has more compassion and more solicitude for His unrelenting persecutors than for Himself. His soul is more keenly pained at the thought of the eternal condemnation awaiting these blinded creatures, than by all the insulting reproaches which they continue to spew out at Him in this hour of His extremest anguish. Yet, before uttering His complaining cry of desolation and of abandonment by His Father, before comforting His beloved disciple or even His afflicted Mother, He prays for those merciless enemies of His, who in their persistent, culpable, and passionate blindness, will not recognize and acknowledge His divinity: "Forgive them, O Father! the guilt of their blindness and ignorance." Thus lovingly and mercifully did our

Saviour deal with His enemies. Love of enemies is the text of the first sermon preached from the pulpit of the cross.

2. "AMEN, I SAY TO THEE, THIS DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE"

"And one of those robbers who were hanged, blasphemed Him, saying: If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying: Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him: Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." (*Luke xxiii.*)

The figures and prototypes of the Old Testament are being realized. Joseph, who was a prototype of Christ, found himself, in the days of his degradation in Egypt, placed between two malefactors; to one of whom he foretold his rehabilitation, to the other his coming condemnation. And Christ too, as He hangs dying upon the cross, between two convicts, is also a prototype; for on the great judgment day He will appear before our eyes, similarly attended, with the just upon His right and the reprobate upon His left hand.

And who was this highly-favored individual, whose privilege it was to be the first to reap the fruits of Christ's sufferings, and to hear these words of consolation? Holy Scripture furnishes neither his name nor his previous history; designating him, together with his companion in suffering, as a public robber. The robber recognizes his guilt, regretfully confesses it before the whole world, and is willing to suffer the temporal punishment incurred. "We suffer justly, for we receive the due rewards of our evil deeds." O that every sinner would understand what value such an humble self-accusation has in the eyes of our divine judge! In heartfelt sympathy and with generous charity, he defends the friendless Jesus, and by testifying to His innocence, averts from him, to the best of his power, the blasphemous rebuke of the impenitent thief, saying: "This man hath done no evil." Consider the circumstances attentively. At a moment when all were hurling jeers, insults and blasphemies at the dying Jesus, when His own disciples had either denied or deserted Him, this criminal fearlessly acknowledges the innocence of the Redeemer. Whence come the courage and the strength to make this open

profession of faith? From supernatural love, which is mightier than death itself. Now turning his head, he looks imploringly at his Saviour, and says: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." What a living faith! This man sees at his side a deserted, destitute victim nailed to a cross, a malefactor covered with wounds, and condemned to the most disgraceful of deaths; but looking as he does, with the eye of faith, he discovers in this wounded and dying culprit, the Lord, the King to whom the kingdom belongs, that God who possesses both power and grace sufficient to forgive all sin. And although he had wasted and lost his whole lifetime in wrong-doing, he turns with confidence to his divine Master and King, and sues for pardon. What a courageous hope! He asks not for any earthly favor, nor for relief from his sufferings, nor for release from impending death. His soul yearns eagerly for one look of mercy from the eye of the crucified Jesus, only one look like unto that which was given to the penitent Peter, forgiveness of his many sins, and a gracious kindly remembrance by Jesus in the kingdom of heaven.

3. "WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON"

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore had seen His mother, and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son." (*John xix.*)

In the midst of His agony, Jesus sees at the foot of His cross four faithful, deeply-sympathizing friends; three women and one man. Of these four persons, who in this hour of darkness and despair, persevered with courage and resolution in adhering to their disgraced and fallen Lord, three belonged to the weaker sex. This circumstance reflects undying honor on the devout female sex, and foreshadows prophetically woman's fearless devotion to the cause of Christ for all time to come.

O Mary, my mother of sorrows! As thou standest under the cross, with what awful and real precision is fulfilled the dismal prophecy of Simeon, uttered three and thirty years before. That threatened sword is really now piercing thy bleeding heart. But I can not conceive nor describe thy suffering, for the lamentation of Jeremias is now being verified in thee. "To what shall I compare thee? or to what shall

I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? to what shall I equal thee that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy sorrow: who shall heal thee?" Yet, my love discovers and appreciates to some extent what thou hast suffered. In thy own soul, thou didst bear every wound of Jesus' body, every thorn of His painful crown, and the very nails which pierced His feet and hands. His every pang was a pang in thy tender sympathizing soul, for your hearts were but as one heart. And yet, like a heroine, thou *standest* erect beneath the cross. Worthy and heroic mother of the great high-priest and victim, thou dost bravely unite thy sacrifice with His, and offerest it up to divine justice for the salvation of mankind.

Down upon this grieving mother at the foot of the cross, the dying Jesus looks intently. Ah! how tenderly she had loved Him all through life; how anxiously she had cherished Him, in her solicitude for His comfort and happiness; how many cares she had borne; how many trials and privations suffered in silence for three and thirty years. Alas! how lonely now! St. Joseph is dead, and Jesus is in His agony. Who is left to be her stay and comfort amid the trials and tribulations of her declining years? But hark! a voice from the cross: "Woman, behold thy son!" They are the words of Jesus. He is appointing St. John, the stainless, pure, virginal St. John, as His own successor in His mother's affections. The beloved disciple, "whom Jesus loved," the loyal, all-believing, all sacrificing John, is now assigned to the honorable position of son, friend, counsellor and protector of the childless Virgin Mary. For her, indeed, the exchange is a sad one: to replace the Son of God by the son of a fisherman, an adopted child in lieu of her own offspring. But the patient Mary cheerfully accepts the choice made for her by Jesus. She answers on this solemn occasion in the self-same words which years before she uttered, when the glorious mystery of her election to the motherhood of God was announced to her, namely: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word."

4. "BEHOLD THY MOTHER"

"After that, Jesus saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her to his own." (*John* xix. 27.)

Much indeed to be envied is this holy apostle St. John,

deemed, as he was by Christ, worthy of so distinguished a privilege as to be permitted to call the Queen of heaven and earth by the sweet name of mother. Holy commentators observe the name of John is not again mentioned in the gospel narrative; that favorite of Jesus being always designated as "the disciple," in order to signify that every one who is a true disciple of Christ, and adheres faithfully and steadfastly to the cross, is in truth a child of Mary, and as such enjoys a claim on her maternal love and powerful intercession. Here, too, is a glorious mystery. In the same moment that Jesus, the only-begotten son of Mary, expires on Calvary, she becomes mother of the redeemed, and, in the person of St. John, adopts the whole human family as her own children. Such were the terms of the last will and testament of our dying Saviour, dictated from His death-bed, the blood-stained cross, in order that we should honor and love the sweet and holy Virgin, as our heavenly Mother.

5. "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

"And now the sixth hour was come: and from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour, and the sun was darkened. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli! Eli! lamma sabacthani? which is, being interpreted: My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some of the standers-by, hearing, said: Behold, He calleth Elias."

Observe here how the creature has risen up against his Creator, the chosen nation against its Messiah, in the vain effort to extinguish and stifle upon the cross eternal, uncreated light. In presence of this awful crime the very sun hides his face, and all nature puts on a darkling mantle of terror and gloom. So marked and general was this unnatural and untimely darkness, so appalling this disturbance in the elements, that the heathen nations were much terrified, and made a record of it in their state-papers and documents. This last fact we learn from an epistle written in the year 164, by Tertullian, and addressed to the dignitaries of the Roman Empire. In this letter, he speaks of this remarkable event at the death of Christ, and reminds them that they had a record of it in the city of Rome; saying, "You yourselves have this occurrence recorded in your government-annals." This darkness was not the effect of a natural eclipse caused by the moon passing between the sun and the earth; for it being the time of the

Easter full moon, such an eclipse was simply impossible. It was really a miracle wrought by Divine Omnipotence, who commanded the great luminary of day to withhold its light during the hours that our Saviour hung upon the cross. It was awfully and strikingly significant of that black pall of iniquity, with which the Jewish people had shrouded themselves and their future generations till the end of time. It was the fulfilment of the old prophecy uttered by Amos: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that the sun shall go down at mid-day, and I will make the earth dark in the day of light." Now at last the Jews had that "sign from heaven," which, in the malice of their unbelief, they had once mockingly asked for from Jesus, and of which, too, the Egyptian darkness of 1500 years previous was an ominous figure. Blinded nation that they were! They refused to open their eyes and to duly recognize the soft sweet light which three and thirty years before had lit up Bethlehem on Christmas night. Therefore the darkness of night and of spiritual death, settles down upon them in the midst of day.

From the silent depths of this mysterious gloom, the voice of Christ is heard, uttering in solemn tones the words: "Eli! Eli! lamma sabaethani?" "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" So fully and completely did our Saviour wish, out of His love for sinful mankind, to bear the penalties inflicted by divine justice, to taste the veriest bitterness of the death-agony, that He shrouded His very soul in that darkness of desolation and of abandonment by His eternal Father, which the sins of men had brought down upon their guilty souls. He died thus in order to secure for us the nearer presence of a merciful God in our death-hour.

6. "I THIRST"

"Afterward, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst. Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar. And one of the standers-by, running, took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, put it on a reed of hyssop, put it to His mouth, and gave Him to drink, saying with the others: stay, let us see whether Elias¹ will come to deliver Him."

¹A sarcastic and sneering distortion of the expression, Eli! Eli! lamma Sabaethani? uttered by Jesus a few minutes previously.

Well might the divine Sufferer thirst! for, since the chalice of the last supper on the previous night, a period of twenty hours, no drink had moistened His parched lips, save the few bitter drops of gall administered just before the crucifixion, mingled as they were with the blood that flowed down from His thorn-pierced brow. Extreme thirst it must have been; for every one of His countless wounds had served as a drain upon His life's blood, allowing it to escape drop by drop, till all moisture was drawn from His system, and the very well-springs of vitality were exhausted. During the space of twenty successive hours He had been abused, dragged hither and thither, scourged, punished in every conceivable manner, and was so completely worn out that a racking, burning fever must have been consuming every portion of His frame. The rough iron nails must have burned His hands and feet like red-hot irons. The stripes of the lash on His flesh must have been so many furnaces of fierce inflammation. His sacred head must have been all on fire with fever and pain from the effect of the penetrating thorns. His limbs were well nigh drawn from their sockets; the weight of His whole body as it hung upon the cross must have produced an intolerable anguish and exhaustion. Shockingly depleted, therefore, as His whole system was, the consequent thirst must have been intolerable. His plaintive cry in the midst of this intense suffering, His acknowledgment of a desire for a drop of cool, refreshing water, should strike terror into our thoughtless hearts. He who made the waters of the ocean, He who caused the fountains of the earth to well over with life-giving waters for man and beast, says, solemnly and plaintively: "I thirst."

And now, Christian reader, direct your attention to Mary, our sorrowful Mother. "I thirst," exclaims her beloved son; and the mother who had at all times cared for her child with indescribable fidelity, who at every moment of her life was ready to shed her heart's blood for Him, can only look up in despair upon His dying countenance, to detect the parched, swollen and trembling lips; but she can not relieve Him. She, the chosen Mother of God, the Queen of heaven and earth, has not even a drink of cold water to extend to her gasping child Jesus. "I thirst," He exclaims from His lofty station of pain and humiliation on the cross, and the agonized mother can not help Him in His distress. Who can describe, who can conceive the heart-rending perplexity of the Mother

of Sorrows in this most pitiable of all situations? Words fail us in this extremity of human suffering.

Moreover, our Saviour experienced another kind of thirst besides the mere natural thirst of lips and tongue. He thirsted for the salvation of immortal souls created by the hand of His eternal Father. This spiritual thirst of our Lord was even more keen and intense, if possible, than bodily thirst. At every moment, He beheld in spirit, the countless myriads of men, who, although marked with the blood of redemption, although admitted by the doors of baptism into the ranks of the redeemed, would nevertheless be lost, because of their forgetfulness of the Redeemer Himself. For such unhappy souls does the Son of Man thirst with extreme ardor of love, and yet even at His left hand, and within sound of His voice, the impenitent thief refuses to give Him his soul.

7. "IT IS CONSUMMATED, FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT"

"Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, crying with a loud voice, said: It is consummated; Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. And saying this, and bowing His head, He gave up the ghost."

Solemn and terrible moment! Since the dawn of Creation, the world has never witnessed such a moment of horror: it will never see such again. On the heights of Calvary, a sullen silence has now settled down. Not a sound is heard, save the suppressed groans of "the beloved disciple," the stifled sobs of the grieving, penitent Magdalen, or the occasional deep-drawn sigh of the sorrowing mother of the dead Jesus. But in the heights of heaven, the scene is different. Along its vaulted roofs, resounds a song of joy and exultation; the choirs of angels intone a chant of praise and thanksgiving, and sing: "The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction. Great and admirable, O Lord, are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, king of heaven and earth. All nations shall come and fall down before Thee, and adore Thee; for Thy justice hath been made known to men."

Ite, missa est! Yes, go now; the sacrifice is completed. You have been present in spirit, in intellect, but above all in sorrowing yet joyful heart at the solemn act of the world's redemption; at that glorious sacrifice to the eternal Father, celebrated and offered up by the King of martyrs and the

Priest of all priests, Jesus Christ, on the altar of the cross, in the midst of countless angels. You have seen fulfilled to the letter all that the patriarchs and prophets have, by word and deed, foretold and prefigured for thousands of years. All that a merciful God had decreed from all eternity, all that He promised to our first parents in Eden, has been fully realized. All that the souls of the just in limbo, and the pious and good on earth had prayed and longed for, has been happily accomplished; namely, the redemption and eternal salvation of the human race. It is consummated.

CHAPTER XX

MIRACULOUS EVENTS AT THE DEATH OF JESUS. HIS SIDE IS PIERCED. THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS. THE BURIAL. HE APPEARS TO THE SOULS OF THE JUST IN LIMBO

Matt. xxvii. 51-66; Mark xv. 38-47; Luke xxiii. 45-56; John xix. 31-42

“AND behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints, that had slept, arose; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many.” (*Matt. xxvii. 51.*)

“The centurion who stood over against Him, seeing what was done, that Jesus, crying out in this manner, had given up the ghost, glorified God, saying: Indeed this was a just man; indeed He was the Son of God. And they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God. And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts. All His acquaintance, and many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee, stood afar off, looking on and beholding these things. Among whom were Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee, who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him and ministered to Him, and many other women that came up with Him to Jerusalem.”

Before proceeding onward, let us consider the five wonderful events which took place at the death of Jesus. The first of these, namely, the three hours' darkness during our Lord's agony, has been already described. The second event was the tearing asunder into two parts the veil of the temple. This veil or curtain concealed the holy of holies; and only once a year, on the day of the great atonement, the high-priest, and he only, was permitted to venture behind this veil, when he went to sacrifice the victim of expiation. According to Jewish accounts, this curtain was forty yards long and twenty wide, embroidered heavily with golden and purple threads, and so artistically wrought that it required a whole year's work at the hands of several thousand young girls to finish it. And now, at the very instant when the veritable High-Priest on Golgotha is entering, with His own sacrificial blood, into the Sanctuary, and offering up the only efficacious sin-atonement, this veil of the temple is rent in twain from top to bottom. This was a sign that admission to the Most High, that is to say, to reconciliation in and through Christ, was now granted to all men; that the ancient figurative sacrificial worship of the Old Law had been abolished, and that the Jewish temple had lost its use and meaning forevermore. But a few hours previous, the chief-priest Caiphas had rent his garments in a fit of hypocritical indignation, thereby rejecting, in the name of the whole nation, the Messiah as a blasphemer of God. Now, the Almighty, in just anger, tears the garments of the Sanctuary, and thereby rejects forever the Jewish nation.

The third miraculous occurrence was the terrible earthquake during the agony of Jesus. Reliable annalists assure us that mountains and valleys were agitated fearfully, not only in Palestine, but throughout Asia Minor, and away to the west as far as Spain. On Calvary the very rocks were rent. Thus did inanimate, irrational nature manifest its horror at the death of its Creator. A thrill of mingled terror and protest ran through its inmost recesses of existence, when it witnessed the crime perpetrated against their Lord and Master by reasonable and intelligent human beings.

The fourth miraculous event was the resurrection from their graves of many dead persons. These are called, in the Scripture, holy persons. This strange resurrection of such deceased persons is variously commented upon by holy and learned writers, and variously explained. It is commonly held that these servants of God did not go through the mys-

tery of their real and final resurrection in glorified and impassible bodies; that they were not permitted, on the day of the Ascension, to go up with Christ into heaven with bodies and souls. Theirs was rather a temporary resurrection; and after they had appeared to many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, comforting the faithful, encouraging the doubtful, exhorting the unbelieving to conversion, and giving testimony to all that the crucified Christ was really the Conqueror of death and the Lord of life, their bodies returned to their silent graves, whilst their souls were led up into heaven by Christ on the day of His ascension.

Lastly, the fifth miraculous occurrence was the spiritual resurrection, or the conversion of many of those persons who were present at the death of Christ. They witnessed the preternatural disturbances in the heavens and on the earth; they heard Christ cry out, with a loud voice, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," thereby proclaiming that this was an act of His own free will, and not of coercion, as is the case with other dying mortals, but that He was going to His death voluntarily. All these circumstances touched the heart of many spectators, who thereupon professed the truth, and with contrite hearts acknowledged: Surely this is the Son of God. Here again discover and acknowledge the blessed fruit of that intercessory prayer of our great High-Priest: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." How inscrutable are the decrees of the Lord, how mysterious and hidden the ways of divine justice and mercy! The Jewish priesthood, in blindness and perversity, rushed forward to dark destruction, while the pagan Centurion of heathen Rome discovered the light, followed it and believed. Several learned annalists inform us that this centurion's name was Longinus, and that he suffered martyrdom for the faith of Christ, in Cappadocia.

"Then the Jews (because it was the paraseve) that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that was a great Sabbath-day), besought Pilate that the legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it hath given testi-

mony,¹ and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true, that you also may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: You shall not break a bone of Him. And again another Scripture saith: They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (*John.*)

As in the slaughter of the figurative paschal lamb of the Old Testament, the bones were to remain unbroken, in order that the appearance might be preserved of a victim sacrificed in perfect entirety and soundness, so was the adorable body of our Lord, the true paschal lamb, to be spared such a ruthless desecration after death. But why was that dreadful rent of the lance permitted to be made in His right side, and so near to His sacred heart? The holy doctors of the Church assign a threefold reason for this piercing of the side of Jesus. In the first place, this lance-thrust, which pierced the side and heart of Jesus with such unerring certainty that the blood spurted forth mingled with water, was to afford proof to all doubters that Christ was not feigning death, but that death had really taken place, and that decomposition of the blood had already set in. In the second place, our loving Redeemer wished to impress all future generations with the dignity and excellence of His holy Church. For, as of old, in the garden of paradise, Eve, the mother of the human family, came forth from the side of father Adam, during his sleep, so from out of the side of the second and spiritual Adam, Jesus Christ, whilst He slept in death on the cross, the new Eve and spiritual mother of all redeemed humanity, the holy Catholic Church, came forth figuratively. For the Church, with all her spiritual riches and precious graces, is but the fruit of the bitter sufferings and cruel death of Christ. The blood and the water flowing from the wounded side of the Lord are the symbols of these precious graces, especially of such as are contained in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. In the third place, the lacerated side and pierced heart of Jesus constitute at once a figure and an evidence of His boundless love toward mankind. Hence His precious blood was to be poured out for us to the very last drop, and His adorable heart to be opened as a place of secure refuge and rest for the distressed, weary and sin-laden souls of men.

¹St. John the Evangelist here alludes to himself, who had been an eyewitness to the crucifixion, and had stood under the cross during our Lord's agony and death.

“After these things, and when evening was come (because it was the paraseve, that is, the day before the Sabbath), there came a certain rich man named Joseph of Arimathea, a city in Judea, who was a noble counsellor, a good and a just man and had not consented to their counsel and doings, who also himself looked for the kingdom of God, and was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. This man came and went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.”

“But Pilate wondered that he should be already dead, and sending for the centurion, he asked him if he were really dead. When he had understood it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph, and commanded that the body should be delivered.”

“He came therefore and took away the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came, he who at first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred-pound weight. Joseph buying fine linen, and taking Jesus down, wrapped Him up in the fine linen; they bound the body in linen cloths with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”

All these marks of respect and love shown to the body of Jesus by these devoted friends, had been foretold by the prophet Isaias, when he said: “His sepulcher shall be glorious, and His rest shall be glorified.” Nicodemus, a prince among the Jews, and Joseph of Arimathea, a rich and influential member of the high council, now touched the body of Jesus with gentle and reverent hands, whereas only a few hours previous the most degraded of men had vented their low malice against that same body. A very wealth of costly spices and other preservatives were lavished upon the remains of Him to whom gall and vinegar had been offered. The finest linens now enclosed those limbs which the executioners had exposed to the vulgar gaze. At the crucifixion, no one, save the penitent thief, was brave enough to speak a word in defense of the Son of God; but now, those men who, through fear of the Jews, had concealed their love for Christ, openly acknowledged themselves to be His friends. Thus was the prophecy of Isaias verified.

The solemn ceremony of taking down from the cross the precious body of Jesus, was carried out with a religious reverence indescribably touching, and amid a sad and sorrowful silence, whilst countless throngs of heavenly spirits hovered about unseen. Those engaged in this sacred duty moved slowly, and gently, and carefully, as though they dreaded to

renew again the sufferings of the inanimate body; for their hearts were overpowered with love and reverence toward the precious remains of this King of martyrs.

But thou, O sorrowful Mother Mary! What were thy sentiments and thoughts in that solemn hour? With what conflicting feelings didst thou receive into thy arms the blessed remains of thy only-begotten son! How lovingly thou didst press His disfigured form to thy breast! How thy mother's heart must have throbbed when, disengaging the cruel crown of thorns from His sacred head, thou didst draw, one by one, the long thorns from His pallid brow!

“Now there was in the place where He was crucified a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, which Joseph had had hewn out in a rock, and wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the paraseve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulcher was nigh at hand. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the monument and went his way. It was the day of the paraseve, and the Sabbath drew on. And the women that were come with Him from Galilee following after, saw the sepulcher and how His body was laid. And Mary Magdalen and the other Mary were sitting over against the sepulcher. And returning, they prepared spices and ointments; and on the Sabbath-day they rested, according to the commandment.”

Thus the Lord of heaven and earth, who found His first resting-place on earth in the property of strangers, namely, in the shepherd's grotto in Bethlehem, likewise found His last resting-place in the grave of a stranger, in the new monument of Joseph of Arimathea. He never owned, in His own right, a place on which He could lay His head, whether in life or in death.

Night had now come on. The noisy crowds had dispersed to their homes, the solemn stillness of death had settled down upon Calvary, and the whole landscape was bathed in the soft light of the full moon of Eastertide. The solemn funeral procession of Jesus now moved slowly and quietly down the hill. Joseph and Nicodemus, aided by a few attendants, carried the sacred remains. The sorrowing Mother, accompanied by the disciple whom Jesus loved, the faithful St. John, followed close behind. Mary Magdalen and the other devoted women came last. Down the hill these few simple, heart-broken mourners moved slowly toward the neighboring garden with its new monument hewn in the rock. With careful and loving

hands the faithful mother composed the limbs of her dead son, and then joined the other women and turned her steps toward her sad home. Holy indeed, and privileged was the spot where the Lord of life and death chose to pass the solemn Sabbath of Redemption week, and to rest from all the works which He had made. Blessed the place in which He was pleased to dwell for three days,—the last hours of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and the first hours of Sunday, till day-break. Here did Jesus achieve His victory over the grave, over death itself. In commemoration of this triumph, the Christians of antiquity honored this spot by the erection of a temple which had then hardly any equal in magnificence.¹ Although in the course of centuries this monumental church was four times destroyed, yet it arose again and again from its ruins, and each time with more splendor and beauty. Inside of this memorable temple, like a church within a church, stands the Chapel of the Sepulcher, an object of reverence both to Christians and Mahommedans, together with the very rock on which reposed the body of the Saviour. In our time, the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary is offered up every day in commemoration of the bleeding sacrifice on the cross.

Before closing our meditations on the miraculous and grace-bringing events of Good Friday, we have one more great mystery to treat; one frequently mentioned in holy Scripture, and of which we are daily reminded when we repeat in the Apostles' Creed the words. "He descended into hell." For the soul of our Lord and Redeemer, at the very moment of leaving the sacred body, descended into hell or limbo; that is, into the place where the souls of the ancient fathers and of all the just of the Old Testament were awaiting the great day of redemption and the reopening of heaven's gates.

Thus the body of our Lord was reposing in the sepulcher, while His adorable soul tarried in limbo; but only until the hour of His glorious resurrection, as the Psalmist David had long before prophesied of the future Messiah: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt Thou give thy holy one to see corruption." (*Ps.* xv. 10.) If we inquire why did Jesus descend into limbo, the holy prince of the apostles, St. Peter, will answer us in his epistle: "Christ also died once for our sins, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit: in which also coming He preached to those spirits

¹The Emperor Constantine the Great and his pious mother Helen, from A. D. 326 to 334.

that were in prison; the gospel was preached also to the dead." (1 *Peter* iii. and iv.) Imagine, if you can, the joy of these just souls when they received the joyful tidings: "Sin is forgiven, iniquity is blotted out, guilt is expiated, and the gates of the celestial paradise are again open. But a few days more, and the Son of Man will ascend in glory to take possession of His throne which has been prepared for Him for all eternity at the right hand of His Father; and all those who in truth and justice have hoped and believed in the Anointed of the Lord, shall be taken up with Him."

Let us now consider what took place in Jerusalem on the day after our Lord's crucifixion, and also how the Church solemnizes the remembrance of Holy Saturday, which is the day intervening between the crucifixion and the resurrection.

"The next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief-priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulcher to be guarded until the third day, lest His disciples come and steal Him away, and say to the people, He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said to them: You have a guard; go guard it as you know. They, departing, made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone and setting guards." (*Matt.* xxvii.)

Observe how the Pharisees and the chief-priests still persist in employing every agency, and in using every stratagem, in order to accomplish securely, and beyond all chance of defeat, their work of malice and of infidelity. Observe, too, how all their shrewdly conceived designs only serve to further the decrees of divine wisdom, by contributing to the glory and triumph of Christ, and to the firmer establishment of our belief in His resurrection. They seal up the monument which contains the body of Jesus, and stamp the seal with the impress from the signet-ring of Pilate. They station about and before the tomb a guard of well-armed Roman soldiers. But these very soldiers become the most certain and most reliable witnesses of the Resurrection. They are the first to announce to Pilate, to the chief-priests, and to the people, the victorious triumph of the Risen One. Hence the words of the Patriarch Job are verified to the letter: "The Lord bringeth to naught the designs of the malignant, so that their hands can not accomplish what they had begun; who catcheth the wise in their

craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked.”
(*Job* v.)

The Christians of the early ages of the Church used to observe the day on which these events took place, by a solemn and mournful silence; calling it *The Day of our Lord's concealment in the tomb*. Toward nightfall, the observances of Easter Eve began. These were about the same as the ceremonies which we now carry out in the forenoon of Holy Saturday, and which still retain, to some extent, the name and significance of Easter Vigils.

The first ceremony of the Church on this day consists in the blessing of the new fire, or Easter lights. This ceremony is performed in the porch of the church, and the fire should, if possible, be struck from a flint. When our Saviour died on Good Friday, and was enclosed in His tomb, the “Light of the World” seemed to be totally and eternally extinguished. But on the vigil of Easter, this light was, as it were, rekindled, and shone in all the fullness of beauty and brilliancy; becoming the source whence all real and true enlightenment shall proceed till the end of time.

Such is the truth which the Church wishes to signify and to honor when she lights from this blessed Easter-fire every light that is to be used in her service during the ensuing year: the Paschal candle, the light before the Blessed Sacrament, the lamps that burn before relics and images, and even, if possible, the other lamps throughout the church.

After the benediction of the new fire, comes the solemn blessing of the Easter Candle, during the chanting of the “Exultet,” or hymn beginning, “Let the angelic choirs of heaven rejoice.” This Paschal candle, which, with its five grains of incense, representing the five wounds, we perceive burning for the next forty days on the gospel-side of the altar, is a figure of the glorified body of Christ with its five wound-marks, signifying also the forty days spent by the risen Saviour with His apostles, from Easter till the time of His ascension. After the blessing of the Easter Candle, follows the reading of the twelve prophecies, or those selections from the Old Testament that have a bearing on the regeneration, redemption and resurrection in Christ of the human race, and which foretell the rejection by God of the Jewish people.

When the prophecies have been all sung, or at least read by the celebrant, the solemn blessing of the baptismal waters takes place with ceremonies differing somewhat from those

of Whitsuneve. The long service then concludes with the solemn sacrifice of the mass, in white vestments, and with lights and flowers on the altar. When the celebrant intones the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the organ and bells which have been silent since the preceding Thursday morning, are heard again. These, together with the triumphant *Alleluia*, several times repeated, announce to the faithful the dawning of Easter with all its joyousness and thanksgiving.

PART VI

The Triumph of Jesus Christ — His Mysterious and Miraculous Life in His Church

CHAPTER I

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. HE APPEARS TO HIS MOTHER MARY, TO MARY MAGDALEN, AND TO THE OTHER DEVOUT WOMEN

Matt. xxviii. 1-15; Mark xvi. 1-11; Luke xxiv. 1-12; John xx. 1-18

1. CHRIST RISES FROM THE TOMB AND APPEARS TO HIS BLESSED MOTHER

THE soul of the crucified Saviour having, from the time it left His body, remained in limbo, among the souls of the first fathers of the human race, returned soon after midnight of the Sabbath to its sanctified body yet resting in the tomb. The interpreters of Scripture tell us that Christ brought with Him the souls of these holy persons to witness the resurrection of His sacred body. We can well imagine that these holy spirits, at last released from prison, and hastening on in company of Christ, and with myriads of angels, to witness this grand mystery, formed a glorious, happy procession. With just reason might this enraptured company, as they floated through the air on their way to Calvary, fill all the realms of space with their joyful chanting of the one hundred and thirteenth psalm of David: "Alleluia! When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a barbarous people, Judea was made his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. The sea saw and fled; Jordan was turned back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills like the lambs of the flock. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou didst flee? and thou, O Jordan, that thou wast turned back? ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams? and ye hills, like lambs of the flock? At the presence

of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob: who turned the rock into pools of water, and the stony hills into fountains of waters. Not to us, O Lord, not to us; but to Thy name give glory. For Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake; lest the Gentiles should say: Where is their God? But our God is in heaven; He hath done all things whatsoever He would. The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men. They have mouths and speak not; they have eyes and see not; they have ears and hear not; they have noses and smell not; they have hands and feel not; they have feet and walk not; neither shall they cry out through their throat. Let them that make them become like unto them, and all such as trust in them. The house of Israel hath hoped in the Lord; He is their helper and their protector. The house of Aaron hath hoped in the Lord; He is their helper and their protector. They that fear the Lord have hoped in the Lord; He is their helper and their protector. The Lord hath been mindful of us, and hath blessed us. He hath blessed the house of Israel; He hath blessed the house of Aaron; He hath blessed all that fear the Lord, both little and great. May the Lord add blessings upon you; upon you, and upon your children. Blessed be you of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The heaven of heaven is the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men. The dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord; nor any of them that go down to hell. But we that live bless the Lord, from this time now and forever. Alleluia!"

The angels, too, who were in the train of these redeemed spirits of antiquity, took up their strain of joy and sang with sympathizing gladness: "Alleluia! Let us rejoice and be glad, for the day of salvation is dawning. Alleluia! To-day shall be made manifest to all men the salvation, the glory, the power and the kingdom of our God and of His Son Jesus Christ. Alleluia! The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction for ever and ever. Alleluia!"

When the mysterious procession of spirits reached Calvary, that dismal, dreary, blood-stained mount was suddenly illuminated with a dazzling brilliancy which made the lonely night brighter than the noon-day sun. Along the route which Jesus had trod, from Jerusalem to the scene of His death, angels now passed, silently and reverently gathering up each drop

of blood that stained the privileged ground, and leaving not a scattered hair nor the smallest shred of His sacred flesh, brought them to Calvary. And now, the souls of the just, once more led by the soul of Jesus Christ, and accompanied by the angels, wing their way to the sealed sepulcher, in order to see and adore the sacred body which had been lacerated, disfigured, tortured and deprived of life on account of sin. How fervently they must have worshipped these precious remains by which the redemption of the human race had been successfully effected! How deeply they must have sympathized in the sufferings of their own Deliverer! And now, the divine-human soul of Jesus Christ bends down to embrace the blessed body; they become once more united, and behold! the pallid and disfigured corpse lights up, glows with radiant life, is suffused with a flood of glory, and rises triumphant and transfigured, forevermore immortal and impassible!

At once Jesus left the narrow confines of the sepulcher and hastened away to relieve and comfort His anxious and afflicted mother.

Although the holy evangelists do not tell us in their books, in which "are not written many things that Jesus did," that He appeared to His beloved mother, yet reason would teach us, and the devout and learned doctors of the Church inform us, and revelations from heaven to devout souls on earth assure us, that Jesus Christ's first visit, after His triumph over sin and death, was to the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹ An old tradition has it, that the sorrowing Mother of Jesus, having passed the whole of Easter night in meditation and prayer, was in a state of tranquil expectation of the resurrection of her divine Son, when suddenly the archangel Gabriel, attended by legions of heavenly spirits, stood before her, and repeated the old familiar salutation: "Ave Maria!" "Hail Mary!" He then added, "Regina cœli lætare!" "Queen of heaven, rejoice! for He whom thou didst deserve to bear is risen from the dead. Alleluia!" Hardly were these glad tidings delivered, when the virgin's humble apartment faded into apparently unbounded space, a flood of brilliant light poured in, and her own beloved Son Himself, glorious and immortal, surrounded by myriads of angels, and followed by the lately-

¹The time-honored practice in Rome of celebrating the Holy Mysteries on Easter morning, in the church of the Blessed Virgin (as designated in our missals to this day), indicates the ancient belief that Christ made His first appearance, after His resurrection, to His Blessed Mother.

released souls of the just of the Old Testament, appeared before her, and in gladsome accents thus addressed her: "Rejoice and be comforted, Mother of Sorrows! thy Son, thy Lord, returns to thee in triumph and honor. Alleluia!"

After appearing to His Blessed Mother, the glorified Jesus departed to make known His resurrection to the penitent Magdalen, the other devout women, and His apostles, and to bring them consolation and encouragement.

2. THE DEVOUT WOMEN GO TO THE SEPULCHER AND FIND THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

"In the end of the Sabbath, when it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,¹ came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, who had brought sweet spices, that coming to see the tomb, they might anoint the body of Jesus. And very early in the morning they set out, it being yet dark; and they come to the monument, the sun being now risen, bringing the perfumes that they had prepared. And they said one to another, who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the monument? When, behold, there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone and sat upon it. And the countenance of the angel was as lightning, and his vesture white as snow. And for fear of him the guards were struck with terror, and became as if they had been dead. In the meantime the women approached, and looking, saw the stone rolled back, for it was very great; and entering into the sepulcher they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. Mary Magdalen ran, therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple," John, "whom Jesus loved, and saith to them: They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him."

Truly it was a genuine, constant and heroic love that these devoted women entertained for Jesus. It was a pure and intense love, living all through the unparalleled degradation and death of its object, and penetrating into His very grave. No longer able to give proof of their love to the living, these women must make His lifeless corpse the object of their tender solicitude. For this fact we refer to the account given us by the holy evangelists.

¹Namely, the morning of our Easter Sunday.

3. THE ANGEL INFORMS THEM THAT JESUS IS RISEN

“And going into the sepulcher, they¹ found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass as they were astonished in their mind at this, behold two men stood by them in white, shining apparel. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their countenance toward the ground, the young man sitting on the right side said to the women: Be not afraid, for I know whom you seek, Jesus who was crucified. But why seek you the living with the dead? He is not here, but is arisen, as He said. Remember how He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid; and going quickly tell His disciples, and especially Peter, that He is risen; and behold He goeth before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him as He told you: ‘Behold, I have foretold it to you.’ And they called to mind His words. And they went quickly out of the monument with fear and great joy, running to tell His eleven disciples and the rest, and they said nothing to any man in the way, for they were afraid.”

If it appears strange for Christ to make known His resurrection to women, even before revealing it to His apostles, and even to appear first to them, let us remember that these devoted women had merited this preference by their fervent and heroic charity. It required unusual courage and devotion on the part of a gentle and timid woman to tarry alone before a vacant and gaping sepulcher, or indeed to be abroad at day-break in a large city, when the times were very exciting and the place crowded with strangers who had been brought together from all quarters on the occasion of the Passover. And moreover, these same Jews, who with wild rage demanded the crucifixion of the divine Master, would not spare any one whom they might suspect of being His friend. But these considerations were not able to restrain the open manifestation by these devout women of their undying love for their Saviour. While the apostles, themselves in gloomy fear and sad despondency, were shut up in an obscure room, these women were at the grave of Jesus, resolved, if no longer able to salute their living Saviour, at least to show their respect to His lifeless remains.

¹The devout women, except Magdalen, who had hastened off to Peter and John.



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OUR LORD MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES AT
EMMAUS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

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4. PETER AND JOHN HASTEN TO THE SEPULCHER

“Peter therefore, rising up, went out, and that other disciple, and they came to the sepulcher. And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And when he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying, but yet he went not in. Then cometh Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulcher and saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been about His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, wrapt up into one place. Then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulcher; and he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture that He must rise again from the dead. These disciples, therefore, went away to their home, Peter wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”

Is there no mysterious meaning in the relative manner of acting on the part of these two disciples? Indeed there is a deep meaning in the fact that St. John, though the younger of the two, and the fleetest of foot, and the first to arrive at the sepulcher, restrained his eager and impetuous anxiety, and merely looked into the deserted tomb, permitting Peter to enter before him. In thus giving precedence to the Prince of the apostles, the Beloved Disciple acknowledged the superior rank and authority of the Fisherman of Galilee; a concession that has ever since been granted to the successors of St. Peter by the bishops of the Catholic Church.

The fact, too, that the winding-sheet and the cloth which had enveloped the divine head of our Lord had been taken from His body and placed carefully on one side, furnished evidence to the perplexed apostles that the body had not been stolen. For no thief would have waited to strip the body and to place the wrapping to one side; especially as linen in those days was of great value. Yet Peter could not fully realize the Resurrection of his Master; for neither His promises nor those of the Scripture had been thoroughly comprehended by him. Hence he turned away from the empty sepulcher, and together with St. John, retraced his steps with perplexed and troubled mind.

5. CHRIST APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALEN

But the devoted, ardent and enthusiastic penitent, Mary Magdalen, could not summon courage to tear herself away from the charmed spot, and after the others had left, re-

mained riveted with grief and consternation, to the sacred place. In reward for her patience and perseverance she was honored by her blessed Lord, and selected to be the first among mortals, after the Blessed Virgin, to enjoy the presence of the risen and glorified Redeemer.

“But Jesus, rising early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom He had cast seven devils. She stood at the sepulcher without,¹ weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher; and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been laid, one at the head and the other at the feet. They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. When she had said this, she turned herself back, and she saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her: Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to Him: Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith to her: Mary! She, turning, saith to Him: Rabboni (which is to say, Master). Jesus saith to her: Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them: I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God. Mary Magdalen cometh, and telleth the disciples that had been with Him, and were now mourning and weeping: I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me.”

We can derive much comfort from this mystery, this fact that our risen Lord, next to His beloved mother, chose a penitent as the first living witness of His resurrection. Innocence, of course, gets the first preference. But penance and contrition are also very precious in the sight of Him who came into the world for the sake of sinners. A pure virgin and a purified penitent were the first to whom Christ appeared on Easter day.

He addresses but one word to the penitent Magdalen, calling her familiarly *Mary*, as a bridegroom addressing his spouse. At the sound of the word *Mary*, and at the tone of the divine voice, her whole being is suddenly changed. Her soul, which up to the present moment was unable to comprehend how Christ could rise from the dead and be alive, is now filled with

¹That is, after Peter and John, in whose company she had come, had gone away again.

supernatural light. At once she realizes the glorious truth that her beloved Saviour is really living. The sound of His well-known voice, uttering the simple word *Mary*, lifts her heart from the depths of affliction to the highest point of joy and happiness. She turns suddenly toward her revered Master, falls at His feet, and ceases not to pour out her soul in words of grateful adoration, till He at length advises that it were better to go away, for He had not yet gone to His Father; yet assuring her that she should see Him repeatedly here below.

6. HE APPEARS TO OTHER DEVOUT WOMEN

Our Lord having completely tranquilized the hitherto anxious heart of Mary Magdalen, vanished from her sight. She then calmly arose and hastened in pursuit of the other women, who were already on their way back to Jerusalem, to tell them the happy tidings. And while she was relating what she had heard and seen, "behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! and they came near and took hold of His feet, and adored Him. Then Jesus saith to them: Be not afraid. Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, there they shall see me. Now it was Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the others who were with them that told these things to the apostles, and these words seemed to them as an idle fancy, and they did not believe them."

It seems incomprehensible that the apostles should be so difficult to convince, so slow to believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But after considering the four reasons assigned by the church-fathers in explanation of this circumstance, we will be inclined to judge the apostles less severely. In the first place, they were mostly very simple and illiterate persons, men of very limited comprehension, of little experience, and hardly able to rise from the perceptions of the senses to supernatural revelations. In the second place, the apparent helplessness with which Christ had surrendered to the enemy in the garden of Olives, and the harrowing account given to them by St. John of the disgraceful death-agony and desolation of Christ on the cross, and of His real death and of His burial in a sepulcher, had made so deep and painful an impression on their souls, that they became impervious to any sentiment of comfort. In the third place, in their agitated condition of mind, they supposed that little or no credit could be given to the words of credulous and excitable women,

especially as Christ, if He were really risen from the dead, would doubtless have shown Himself immediately in the midst of His apostles, instead of giving the preference to weak and unreliable females. Finally, our blessed Lord permitted this uncertainty to exist in the minds of the apostles, in order that by afterward allaying their doubts, and confirming their faith in His Resurrection, He would the more indubitably prove to all mankind that He had really and truly risen from the dead.

7. THE FABLE ABOUT THE SLEEPY SENTINELS

“When the women were departed, behold some of the guards came into the city and told the chief-priests all things that had been done. And they being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: Say you, His disciples came by night and stole Him away when we were asleep. And if the governor shall hear of this, we will persuade him and secure you. So they, taking the money, did as they were taught; and this word was spread among the Jews even unto this day.” (*St. Matt.*)

It is thus that passion always renders men blind, stupid and unscrupulous. Did not these chief-priests and elders know that it were absurd to talk of sleeping witnesses, and that even the most credulous persons could not believe such a paltry excuse on the part of the drowsy sentinels? Did not these Jewish priests perceive that these very sentinels, when mocked by their companions, or questioned by their superior officers regarding this disgraceful neglect of duty, namely, of falling asleep at their posts, would, sooner or later, in order to save themselves and their reputation, reveal the whole truth, and that thus the plotters would be unmasked and exposed to the ridicule of the whole world? Did they not see that this very Christ, of whose wonderful Resurrection they had been so positively informed and assured by the sentinels, must be powerful enough to rend in pieces this tissue of falsehood, by appearing before the whole world as the risen and immortal Messiah? Puny and pitiful subterfuge of these unworthy Jewish priests! How repulsive and despicable their malice! Twice they paid money for the commission of crime; first in the case of Judas' treason, and again in the corruption of the guard. Each time, too, they abstracted the money from the sacred treasury of the temple. Thus one iniquity begets

another, and the man who once allows himself to be misled by passion descends from one folly to another, from one abyss of destruction to a still lower and darker one.

8. THE CHRISTIAN FESTIVAL OF EASTER

Oh, what a good and well-founded right the Church has to rejoice and be glad on this day! It is her own Jesus, her Founder, her Judge, her Bridegroom, who has vanquished death and hell, and risen in triumph from the tomb. His triumph, therefore, is really her triumph, His resurrection from the darkness of the grave is also her resurrection from the mournful observances of Passion-time. In the glory of Easter, all that Christ had taught and wrought during the three years of His ministry secured its confirmation and explanation. If the dull cold vault of death had held Him fast in decay and corruption, as it had retained all other teachers, we would have no pledge for the truthfulness of His teachings, while all the testimony in His favor, given by the Eternal Father, would have been in vain. But to-day, by rending asunder the chains of death and rising triumphantly out of the tomb, He proves Himself incontestably to be the promised One of the prophets, the One to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, whose word is truth and life. But there can not be the least doubt about the truth of the Resurrection of Christ. For nature proclaimed it in the midst of an earthquake; heaven declared it by the voice of the angels; virtue preached it in the words of heaven-favored women; evil testified to it through the report of the heathen sentinels and the proceedings of the Jewish priests; faith confirmed it in Peter and his companions; unbelieving doubt recognized it in St. Thomas; and, finally, the apostles and countless disciples substantiated it by their sufferings and death. Hence all Christendom rejoices; for Christ is risen not for Himself alone: He is the First among the risen; and in His Resurrection, each man who is of good will, holds a guarantee of his own future resurrection from the grave.

On this glorious festival, every Christian should unite with the Church in her joyous triumph. For on this day, death loses its terrors for the individual Christian. Before the resurrection, death was truly named death. But by the Redeemer's victory over the tomb, death has become a mere temporary sleep, a sweet and gentle slumber. Saith the Lord, "the girl is not dead, but sleepeth." Sleep implies a speedy

awakening. In speaking of the death of His beloved friend Lazarus, Jesus said to His disciples: "Lazarus, our friend, sleepeth." St. Paul, in several of his epistles, calls death a sleep, and speaks of the dead as those fallen asleep in the Lord. Nowhere is he more explicit than in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians: "And we will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who have slept through Jesus, will God bring with Him." (1 *Thess.* iv. 12, 13.)

To-day Christ burst asunder the bonds of death, and chattered the prison bars of the sepulcher, rendering the prison unavailable forevermore. When the Son of God pulls down and shatters, who will dare to build up.

Down to the hour of the Resurrection, no one had been able to compel death to relinquish its prey; but when He appeared in the dark prison, His omnipotence set the victims free. How do we designate the victory by which, on this Easter morn, the divine Conqueror acquired a right to claim the prisoners from the clutches of death? Hear St. Chrysostom: "The Saviour first chained the 'strong man armed,' and then despoiled him of those treasures, called by the prophet Isaias, 'the dark, invisible treasures.' And in truth they were enveloped in darkness until the Sun of Justice arose over them and *converted their hell into heaven.*"

Isaias had good reason for terming death a treasury of darkness, for it held very many valuable treasures. All humanity, that real treasure belonging to God, but stolen by the devil when Adam fell, was imprisoned under the empire of death. Christ has liberated our imprisoned race. After first putting death in chains, He carried off His treasures, namely, the whole human family. St. Paul teaches this truth in the following words: "He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath transported us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

On this blessed Easter day are verified the words which our divine Lord uttered on a previous occasion, that of healing the paralytic: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth life to whom He will, amen I say unto you, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have

life in Himself. Wonder not at this; for the hour cometh wherein all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.”

To-day we should also recall to mind the words of St. Paul: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruit of them that sleep. For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” In these words we are reminded of a very profound though very evident truth; namely, that there are really but two men in history, the first Adam and the second Adam; the latter being Christ our risen Saviour. As the first Adam was the origin of death, the second Adam is the principle of life. As it is our union, or rather our identity, with the first Adam, which has inflicted death upon us, union and identity with the second Adam, who has triumphed to-day over death, will restore us to life, to the true life of which He is Himself the principle.

Let us rejoice, then, and from the bottom of our hearts be thankful to that divine Saviour who has torn from the pallid brow of death its dismal laurels, who has stripped the grave of its terrors.

CHAPTER II

THE THIRD AND FOURTH APPEARANCES OF JESUS. HE APPEARS TO THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS, AND TO SIMON PETER

Mark xvi. 12, 13; Luke xxiv. 13-35

1. CHRIST AND THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

“AFTER that Jesus showed Himself in another shape to two of them, walking, the same day,¹ as they were going into the country to a town called Emmaus, which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem to the west. And they were talking together of all these things that had happened.

“And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned these things together with themselves, Jesus Himself also drawing near, went with them. But their eyes were held, that they should not know Him. And He said to them: What

¹Namely, Easter Sunday.

are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad? And one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said to Him: Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done in these days? And he said to them: What things? And they said: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people; and how our chief-priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel. And now, besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also, of our company, affrighted us, who before it was light, were at the sepulcher, and not finding His body, came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who say that He is alive. And some of our people went to the sepulcher, and found it so as the women had said; but Him they found not.

“Then Jesus said to them: O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him.”

Consider here first, the pensive and sad condition of these two disciples on their lonely journey to Emmaus, and, secondly, the tender, condescending manner in which Jesus seeks to rouse their drooping hearts. The fresh remembrance of the deep disgrace to which they had seen their beloved Master reduced, had shaken their faith in Him. Afraid to concur in the manly declaration of St. Peter: “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,” they style Jesus a prophet only. Their hopes are blasted, their charity is extinguished, and they are sad; that is to say, the happiness they used to feel in being His disciples and adherents is gone, their zeal has grown cold, their courage is departed.

2. HE IS RECOGNIZED AS HE BREAKS BREAD

“And they drew nigh to the town whither they were going; and He made as though He would go farther. But they constrained Him, saying: Stay with us, because it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And He went in with them. And it came to pass, whilst He was at table with them, He took bread, and blessed and brake, and gave it to them.



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And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another: Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke to us in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?"

These two disciples had obtained an extraordinary favor from Jesus in return for their humble attention to His teachings, and for their friendly hospitality to a stranger. The Son of the living God condescended to sit at table with them, and to dispense to them that same divine sacrament which He had administered to the apostles at His last supper. It was by virtue of this token of His unbounded ardent love, that they recognized Him to be the faithful Good Shepherd who had given His life for His sheep.

3. HE APPEARS TO SIMON PETER

"And rising up the same hour, they returned back to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them saying: The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread. But neither did they¹ give credit to them."

CHAPTER III

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH APPEARANCES OF JESUS. INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PEN- ANCE. THE UNBELIEVING THOMAS

Luke xxiv. 36-45; John xx. 19-30

1. HE APPEARS TO THE ASSEMBLED APOSTLES

ON THE morning of that Easter day, Jesus appeared to the penitent Magdalen; about noontide, to the penitent Peter; and toward the last hour of the day He instituted the Sacrament of Penance and of Reconciliation, for the consolation of each wandering sheep of His flock. Let us read the beautiful narrative of these events, as it is given by the inspired pen of the evangelists:

"Now while they were speaking these things at length, late that same day, the first day of the week, Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were at table, and the doors being shut for

¹Some, who still doubted.

fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said to them: Peace be to you. It is I, fear not. But they being troubled and affrighted, supposed that they saw a spirit. And He said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet and His side.”

“But while they yet believed not, and wondered for joy, He said: Have you here anything to eat? And they offered Him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains He gave to them. And He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He had risen again.” And He said to them: “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.¹ Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. And He said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day.”

2. INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

“The disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord. He said to them again: Peace be unto you. As My Father sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed upon them, and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.”

By virtue of these highly important and expressive words, Jesus solemnly and formally conferred upon the apostles and their successors the divine right of remitting sins. If then the Most High, in the inscrutable decrees of His Providence, was pleased to make use of weak, sinful and mortal men, as His agents in the forgiveness of sins, and if besides He has clearly and positively declared this choice of His, as being of His own will, who will dare to find fault with God's will? Of this divine will, and of the office consequent and dependent upon

¹Namely, those things concerning His passion and death, through which He was to pass to His victory.

that will, the apostles were fully and clearly convinced. Hence St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, styles himself and his brethren in the priesthood the ministers and dispensers of the divine mysteries. Now, of all the mysteries which affect man, those of mercy and of forgiveness of sins must take the first and most important place. Again, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul calls himself and his fellow-apostles ambassadors of Christ, and to whom was entrusted the office of forgiving sins. The Church has always firmly held and plainly taught this grace-bringing mediatorship, that is, the priestly plenitude of power to forgive sins.

3. THE DOUBTING THOMAS

At the time when our blessed Lord conferred upon the apostles the fullness of power to forgive sins, one of them was absent. Hence it is the opinion of the Church-fathers that Jesus must have afterward bestowed it upon him singly and individually. This absent apostle was Thomas. "But Thomas, who is called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples, therefore, said to him: We have seen the Lord. He said to them: Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." This was certainly very exacting on the part of Thomas, and did we not know the patience, and forbearance, and condescension of our amiable Redeemer, we might well wonder how He could ever have chosen for an apostle such a skeptical and incredulous man. For was it not sinful pride and scandalous recklessness on the part of this man to thus summarily and rashly reject the unanimous testimony of his fellow apostles, and to pass eight long days in his disbelief? But we must remember, in the first place, that the Spirit of Pentecost had not yet been poured out upon the apostles. Moreover, our Lord wanted to give to His Church, through this conduct of Thomas, the consoling counsel, that even when great and chosen men manifest at times a weakness of faith, and in transitory passion forget the subjection due to the word of God and of His Church, we must not despair of their conversion; that we must deal leniently with the wavering, and give them time for reflection.

Finally, our Lord permitted this obstinacy on the part of Thomas, as remarked above, in order that the fact of having at last yielded His belief, after so long and persistent a state

of doubt, demanding and obtaining proofs, would be for all future generations a certain proof of the real Resurrection of Christ.

4. THOMAS, TOO, SEES AND ACKNOWLEDGES JESUS

“After eight days His disciples were again within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the door being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be unto you. Then He saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said to Him: My Lord and my God. Jesus saith to Him: Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed. But the eleven disciples went away into Galilee.”

“Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

CHAPTER IV

THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH APPEARANCES OF JESUS. THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES. JESUS COMMITS THE OFFICE OF SUPREME PASTOR TO PETER

Matt. xxviii. 16, 17; John xxi. 1-25

1. JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS. THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

“AFTER this Jesus shewed Himself again to His disciples, at the sea of Tiberias, and He shewed Himself after this manner. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas who is called Didymus, and Nathaniel who was of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples. Simon Peter saith to them: I go a-fishing. They say to him: We also come with thee. And they went forth and entered into the ship; and that night they caught nothing.”

“But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answered

Him, No. He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast therefore; and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord. Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girded his coat about him (for he was naked),¹ and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the ship, for they were not far from the land, but as if it were 200 cubits, dragging the net with the fishes.”

“As soon then as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith to them: Bring hither of the fishes you have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, 153. And although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus saith to them: Come and dine. And none of them that were at meat durst ask Him: Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth it to them, and fish in like manner. This was now the third time that Jesus was manifested to His disciples, after He was risen from the dead.”

The first two apparitions of our Lord after His resurrection had taken place in Judea, and in Jerusalem itself; the first on the evening of Easter Sunday, the second eight days later. As Christ had previously commanded, the apostles had returned to their home in Galilee; and here it was, on the sea of Tiberias, sometimes called the sea of Galilee, that the risen Christ manifested Himself to them the third time. This apparition of Christ is specially important, for it was on this occasion that the Primacy of St. Peter, or his office as visible Head of the Church, was formally established.

At first the seven apostles did not recognize their divine Master. After His Resurrection from the dead, He did not belong to the earth in the same way as previously, and it was necessary that His disciples should be prepared gradually not to see Him any more, at least with their bodily eyes. Hence every one of these manifestations of the Saviour possessed one remarkable characteristic. As He would suddenly stand in their midst, or near them, although the glory of His transfigured body was concealed beneath His ordinary appearance, His person was somewhat mysterious and ethereal, so that it was only by degrees they would come to recognize Him. He

¹Having worn at His work only a cloth about His loins, as customary then and there with fishermen.

would converse with them, then depart as suddenly as He had come. And who is the first on this occasion to recognize his Lord and Master? John, the chaste and pure disciple. How truly had our Lord once said: "Blessed are the *clean* of heart, for they shall see God."

The miraculous draught of fishes is here very appropriate and significant. Jesus Christ wished on this occasion to appoint to his new and important position the disciple whom on a previous occasion He had styled the fisher of men, and also to signify to him how in the future time he would gather countless souls of all conditions into the net of the holy Church, thus releasing them from the tempest-tossed waves of the world, and that although countless would be their number, the unity of the Church would not be broken.

2. JESUS APPOINTS PETER HEAD OF THE CHURCH

"When, therefore, they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs."

"He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs."

"He saith to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved, because he had said to him the third time, Lovest thou Me? and he said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him: Feed My sheep."

Why does our blessed Redeemer exact, in this place, from the Prince of the Apostles, this thrice-repeated and solemn profession of his love for his Master? He is about to entrust to Peter's care and tutorship all His flocks, both lambs and sheep, laity and clergy. Hence the Master must exact from Peter and his successors a deep unbounded love, as the surest pledge and strongest proof and guaranty of a good and wise pastorate. That Good Shepherd who, in defense of His sheep, has sacrificed His life on the cross, can entrust His beloved flocks to no keeper who has not in his soul the strongest, truest and most disinterested love. Three times had Peter shown want of constancy, three times had he denied his Lord. How mild and gentle the charity of Jesus, even when He chastises! The triple denial is now to be atoned for; and what atonement does the good Jesus demand from His con-

science-stricken Apostle? Merely a thrice repeated act of charity, a treefold avowal of future fidelity. How grand and incomprehensible is supernatural love, thus to be able to atone for sin!

Jesus, therefore, after confirming the Prince of the Apostles in a steady and lasting love, delivered to him formally, and in the presence of the other apostles and disciples, the mysterious shepherd's staff, to be used in governing and directing the entire flock of that universal Church, which is about to be founded throughout the world. At the same time Jesus tells him to feed them in three different ways; namely, as teacher of truth, as high-priest of grace and mercy, and as king through precept and wise regulations.

3. JESUS FORETELLS TO PETER THAT HE WILL BE CRUCIFIED

But St. Peter was to be the successor of his divine Master, not only in authority, but also in his martyrdom. As Christ, like a devoted shepherd, had laid down His life for His sheep, so should His successor in office, St. Peter, do the same. He shall one day be bound in fetters, dragged before the courts, and sentenced to be crucified; thus resembling his divine Predecessor in a threefold manner: in the pastoral power, in the gentle love of the shepherd, and in the shepherd's self-denial, even to death on the cross.

Hence Christ continues His address to Peter: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this He said signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when Jesus had said this, He saith to him: Follow Me."

"Peter turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also at the supper leaned on His breast and said: Lord, who is he that shall betray Thee? Him, therefore, when Peter had seen, he saith to Jesus: Lord, what shall this man do? Jesus saith to him: So I will have him to remain till I come; and what is it to thee? Follow thou Me. This saying, therefore, went abroad among the brethren, that the disciple should not die. And Jesus did not say to him, He should not die; but: So I will have him to remain till I come; what is it to thee?"

Here St. Peter inquires of the divine Master whether St. John too is to have a martyr's death like the one just pre-

dicted of himself. And why does he make this inquiry? In the first place, out of a natural curiosity, for he was a particular friend of St. John's. In the second place, he could not forget the favor shown in the past by Christ to this beloved apostle. Peter, who had been a witness of the marked love shown by Christ to this apostle, could not understand why, when foretelling that Peter was to be His successor in power and authority, and His imitator in death, He should say nothing of St. John. In his extreme humility he shrank from such marked distinction, and would gladly elicit from the Master some words of encouragement for his friend and companion. Jesus, however, directs His attention to the mysterious ways of the divine decrees, and signifies to him that John shall remain; that is, that he shall not die a violent death till the Lord shall come in judgment upon the deicidal city of Jerusalem, and that when St. John shall have then accomplished his mission, He will take him to Himself.

4. JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES ON THE MOUNT OF GALILEE

The holy Scriptures mention but two appearances of our Saviour in Galilee after His resurrection. Of the first, which took place on the shores of the sea of Galilee, and in presence of four apostles and three disciples, we have just heard. The second is described by St. Matthew in the following words: "The eleven disciples went into Galilee to a mountain,¹ where Jesus had appointed them; and seeing Him, they adored Him; but some doubted." According to the statement made by St. Paul in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to Corinthians, there must have been a great number of witnesses to this appearance, for he says distinctly: "He was seen by more than 500 brethren at once, of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep." Among this 500 there were some, as St. Matthew observes, who, notwithstanding this real, and true, and miraculous appearance of Christ, could not, or would not, bring themselves to believe in the resurrection, or at least treated it lightly, and permitted doubts to linger in their minds. It is quite probable that besides these two apparitions in Galilee, mentioned in Scripture, our Saviour appeared often to His friends in Galilee, to instruct them in the mysteries of His holy religion, and to

¹Mount Tabor seems to be the mountain here meant; though other commentators are of the opinion that it is the mount on which Christ preached His "Sermon on the Mount."

comfort them with words of encouragement. During these forty days previous to His Resurrection, He must have often appeared to His blessed Mother, in order to gladden her maternal heart with words of consolation, and by manifestations of His glory to compensate her for all the bitter sorrows she had experienced during life, and especially at His passion and death.

St. John the Evangelist, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," assures us that all the details and incidents of His divine Master's life upon earth, whether before or after His Resurrection, are not to be found in the Holy Scriptures. He says, in closing his own account: "There are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written, every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written." Here we have from the lips of St. John an argument in defense of tradition; a plain assertion that the Scriptures can not be the sole rule of faith. For many things are not written, says the Evangelist. Hence, while we know that all Catholic teaching is founded on the word of God, yet we ought not to expect to find everything in the Bible. Speaking of himself St. John writes: "This is that disciple who giveth testimony of these things, and hath written these things; and we know that his testimony is true."

CHAPTER V

THE NINTH APPEARANCE OF JESUS. HIS ASCENSION

Matt. xxviii. 18-20; Mark xvi. 15-19; Luke xxiv. 46-53; Acts i. 4-14

1. THE FINAL PROMISES. CHARGE TO THE APOSTLES

"AND Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, into the whole world, teach ye all nations, preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

"And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My

name, they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover."

"The Acts of the Apostles" assure us that besides the miracles wrought by the apostles, many wonders were also performed by the faithful laity. At a time when Christianity was to be introduced into the world, the frequent performance of miracles was necessary, in order to prove and confirm the teachings of the Gospel. For later generations, however, and especially for ourselves, this frequent recurrence of miracles is not at all required. For we see before us the standing miracle of the Church itself. We are witnesses of her miraculous history; we have the united testimony of millions of martyrs and confessors.

"And He said to them: Thus it is written; and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead on the third day; and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things; and I send the promise of My Father upon you; but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high."

"He led" His disciples out of the city of Jerusalem, "as far as Bethania, and commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father which you have heard," saith He, "by My mouth. For John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. They therefore who were come together asked Him, saying: Lord, wilt Thou at this time re-establish the kingdom of Israel? But He said to them: It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power. But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost, coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."

2. THE ASCENSION

All these conversations were held, probably, partly in the inn at Jerusalem, partly in the house of Lazarus at Bethania; although commentators are not agreed regarding the exact time and place. He now arose and went out with Mary and His apostles to Mount Olivet. This mountain having

been the scene of the agony and humiliation of the Son of Man, was chosen by Him to be the witness of His glorious Ascension. Many of the disciples and several devout women followed at some distance.

How tender the words of parting which were now addressed by the divine Son to His Virgin Mother, and to the apostles and disciples! How lovingly and fervently they kissed, for the last time, the marks of the wounds on the feet of their glorified Lord! What tears of reverence and love, of mingled joy and sadness, fell from the eyes of this glorious company!

“And after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He lifted up His hands and He blessed them. And while they looked on, and while He blessed them, He departed from them, and was taken up into heaven,¹ and a bright cloud received Him out of their sight. And He sitteth on the right hand of God. And they adored Him.”

“And while they were beholding Him going up to heaven, lo, two men stood by them in white garments, who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven. This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven.”

“And having adored, they returned to Jerusalem, with great joy, from the mount that is called Olivet, which is nigh Jerusalem, within a Sabbath-day’s journey. And when they were come in to the city they assembled in an upper room and remained together, persevering with one mind in prayer, with Mary the mother of Jesus, other devout women, and His brethren, and they were always in the temple praising God.”

3. THE FESTIVAL OF ASCENSION THURSDAY

Every year, on the joyful festival of our Lord’s Ascension, a feast that has been most solemnly celebrated in the Church from remotest antiquity, the soul of every true Christian yields itself up to pious meditation on those mysteries in the life of Jesus which may indeed be in some measure conceived by the believing heart, but which can not be spoken by human tongue. It is a festival of universal triumph. The just souls of the Old Testament triumph and rejoice, for now they have been released from limbo, and with power and glory are on their way to heaven. The holy angels are triumphant, for to-day they see, for the first time, the beginning of that

¹With the souls of the just whom He had delivered from limbo.

glorious occupation by redeemed souls of the places made vacant ages before by the fall of the angels. The prophets of old rejoice, for on this feast their prophecies concerning Christ's first coming have been completely verified. The Blessed Virgin exults, for now at last she beholds her beloved Son exchanging the cross of Good Friday for a happy and everlasting throne in heaven. Human nature triumphs, for now it is glorified in the person of Christ, and is enthroned at the right hand of its Creator. The whole human family rejoice, for now they have a powerful Advocate in heaven to prepare for men of good will dwellings of everlasting happiness. Jesus Christ Himself triumphs; for, having been obedient to the death of the cross, He, in reward therefor, will henceforth rule all nations, till He shall come again at the last day to judge the living and the dead.

To-day Christ in the flesh really left this world; therefore, during the mass of the festival, the Easter-candle, which for forty days has stood burning on one side of the altar as the symbol of our risen Saviour, is extinguished and taken away. Yet Jesus is with us, really and truly present, in the Sacrament of the altar, waiting for us to approach Him, that we may, through the mysterious power of this Sacrament, obtain the grace to participate in His Ascension into heaven.

CHAPTER VI

THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AFTER THE ASCENSION OF JESUS. HER HAPPY DEATH. HER BURIAL. HER MIRACULOUS TRANSLATION INTO HEAVEN

1. MARY'S OUTER LIFE

SERAPHIM and Cherubim, and the whole court of heaven have given a reverent welcome to the returning King of Glory. And now that the clouds of heaven have shut out from our further view the sacred person of Jesus, let us turn awhile for consolation to His blessed Mother, who will yet remain amongst us for some time. Holy Scripture makes but two statements concerning the Blessed Virgin's life subsequent to the Ascension of Jesus; namely, that she continued in constant and kindly intercourse with the apostles, and that St. John, the favorite disciple of her Son, took her under his own

special care. Our Blessed Lady survived about fifteen years after the coming of the Holy Ghost. Most of this time she passed in the city of Jerusalem, in a simple and humble home on Mount Zion, converted after her death into a chapel by the apostles.

The account given to St. Bridget by an angel of God of this portion of Mary's life is extremely interesting. "When the Son of God returned to His kingdom of glory, He wished that His Virgin Mother should remain for some time after Him upon earth in order to encourage and strengthen the good, and to reclaim the erring; to be a mother to the apostles, a support to the first martyrs, a teacher to the confessors, a model to the virgins, a comforter to the widows, and an adviser to married people. This mission she faithfully fulfilled; for when the apostles came to her she disclosed to them all those things concerning the life of her Son which they did not know, or knew but imperfectly. For although they had been enlightened by the Holy Ghost, Mary had been more enlightened than they. She stimulated the martyrs to bear their trials courageously, and even cheerfully, for the sake of Jesus, who Himself had willingly submitted to the severest trials for their sake and salvation. She reminded them that she herself, for the three and thirty years preceding His death, had suffered with great patience continual affliction of heart. She modestly imparted many useful lessons to the first confessors of the faith, who soon learned from her word and example to regulate their lives according to the maxims of her divine Son. From her the virgins learned how to keep themselves pure in thought, word and deed, to avoid levity and other occasions of sin, and to direct all their actions to the glory of God and the sanctification of their souls. She alleviated and soothed the sorrows of widows in their loneliness by relating her own sorrow at the death of St. Joseph, and especially at the cruel death of her son Jesus; how in her heavy trials she had always submitted her will to the divine will, resolved to suffer meekly and patiently any and every tribulation, rather than to desert God for the greatest of earthly goods. Finally, she counselled the married people to love each other with pure and disinterested love, and to devote themselves with unreserved good will to the service of God. She told them how she and her departed spouse were always of one mind, and had loved each other faithfully till death parted them."

2. MARY'S INNER LIFE

Mary was therefore in word and example the "Help of Christians," even during her sojourn upon earth. According to an ancient and reliable legend she did not remain continuously in Jerusalem, but went under the protection of her adopted son to the city of Ephesus in Minor Asia, where she spent some years, though she returned to Jerusalem before her death. In Ephesus, as at Jerusalem, Mary was a devoted mother to the new Christians, and especially a prudent counsellor and sincere comforter of the apostles in their arduous duties. Nor did she neglect her own inner life. But who can conceive the interior sanctity of her soul, or describe it in human language? For thirty-three years this virgin-mother had been witness to the sublime sanctity of her Son, had heard holiness itself come from His holy lips. From the day on which this Child of heaven first reposed upon her breast in Bethlehem, till the sad hour when, after His descent from the cross, His lacerated frame rested upon her lap, an unbroken stream of sublime holiness, of heavenly wisdom, flowed from His soul into hers. O what a wealth of spiritual science, wisdom and enlightenment lay hidden in the Virgin Mary's heart! Her whole interior life was nothing but a continued and blissful loss or burial of self in this abyss of knowledge; an unceasing contemplation of the mysterious and glorious pictures which the life, miracles, and sweet conversation of the Son had left imprinted on her soul.

Saint John was the privileged witness of this saintly life. He had been appointed by Jesus to guard and assist the Blessed Mother. He it was who every day offered up in her presence the unbloody sacrifice of her Son, and dispensed to her the bread of life. In return, Mary confided to him the mysterious world of her meditations, her knowledge of God, and her ardent longing for her beloved Son. And when he went to visit with reverence the places consecrated by the sufferings, and death, and burial of Jesus, Mary frequently accompanied him. When in the quiet evening hour he conversed with her upon the life and sufferings of his beloved Master, or upon the labors and trials of the other apostles, relating to her the growth and prosperity of the infant Church, he received in return from her lips sweet words of heavenly wisdom. How at such times the very angels who hovered over them must have looked and listened with awe

and ecstasy, and admired the seraphic holiness of these two spiritualized lives.

3. HER DEPARTURE FORETOLD

The nearer Mary came to the end of her life upon earth, the more ardently did she yearn to be set free from this world. She longed with a consuming love and motherly affection to go to her beloved Son, sighing wearily with the psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O my God. When shall I come and appear before the face of my Lord!" (*Ps. xlii.*) At last the hour arrived which the Lord in His unfathomable decrees had appointed for Mary's departure from earth. The manner and circumstances attending the revelation made to Mary of this hour are touchingly described in an ancient well-founded legend: "One day, as our Blessed Mother was absorbed in silent prayer on Mount Olivet, she became suddenly filled with such a desire to be reunited to her divine Son that her very heart throbbed violently within her bosom, and tears started from her eyes. So ardent was her motherly love that she could not bear to be any longer deprived of the presence of her divine Son. Hence she eagerly and earnestly besought Him to release her from her long and anxious suspense. And as she prayed, behold an angel, resplendent in beauty, and carrying a palm-branch, appeared before her and respectfully addressed her, saying: 'Hail Mary, blessed Mother of my Lord! He who was Israel's blessing sends thee His blessing.' And Mary replied: 'Reverend messenger from heaven, wherefore comest thou to greet me thus kindly?' And the angel answered: 'Thy Son Jesus, who is our Lord and our God, sends me hither to declare to thee that the hour approacheth when thou shalt appear before Him to receive the crown which He has prepared for thee. All the angels in heaven are in expectation of their future queen.' Mary said: 'Thanks to thee, celestial messenger, for this welcome tidings; and may I ask thee to designate the day and hour of my departure?' Then said the angel: 'Three days from now, at the midnight hour, thou wilt die and be conducted into heaven.' Mary's joy was such at hearing this news, that she said aloud and fervently: 'Blessed art Thou, Jesus Christ, my Son and Lord, for Thou hast heard my ardent prayer, and marked me for the happiness of heaven.' Then turning to the angel, she added: 'If I have found grace before the Lord, I

would ask three favors more; first, that my Son would be pleased to come to my assistance in that last hour; secondly, that all the apostles may be with me in my agony, and may bury my body; lastly, that no evil spirits be permitted to disturb me.' The angel answered: 'Thy three requests are granted; for thy Son will be with thee, the holy apostles, now scattered throughout the nations, are to assemble here within three days, and the evil spirits thou needest not to fear, for they have all been placed in thy power since thou hast crushed the serpent's head.' Then handing her a palm-branch, he continued: 'Receive this bough brought from paradise; it is a token of thy triumph over all enemies; direct it to be borne before thy remains, and no evil spirit can come near.' Saying which, and bowing reverently, the angel winged his way back to heaven."

4. HER PEACEFUL AND HAPPY DEATH

Another ancient legend thus relates the circumstances of Mary's death: "When the holy apostles, led by heaven, arrived in Jerusalem, they found the mother of their beloved Lord prostrated with excessive weakness and languor. Wonderingly they inquired, What meaneth thy sad and languid state, honored Mother? Why do we find thee ailing, who never before complained? Mary replied: The fire of divine love hath touched my heart, lighting up an irrepressible desire to see my beloved Son, and to dwell with Him forever; and so my body languishes and grows faint, and I shall soon die. The apostles replied: As says the bride in the Canticle, we will stay thee up with sweet-smelling flowers whose fragrance will refresh and strengthen thee. Mary rejoined: But one flower, the flower from the root of Jesse, my own beloved Son Jesus, can now revive me; for Him my soul longeth. He hath heard my prayer, and hath revealed to me that in three days' time I shall join Him in heaven. I have besought Him to come to my assistance in my hour of death. On hearing these words, the apostles could not repress their sighs and tears, yet said: Blessed Lady, must thou then go and leave us behind? Thou art our chief source of comfort upon earth; for whenever we saw thee, or on our journeys thought of thee, we felt as if we had our blessed Master yet with us. When thou shalt be gone, we will be then really orphans. Mary replied: Be comforted, friends of my divine Son. During the three days yet to come, let us console each other in prayer,

When I leave you, I will become your intercessor with my Son. With reverent devotion the apostles listened to the beautiful words of the Virgin, as she revealed to them high and holy mysteries of God and the kingdom of heaven, till their hearts became inflamed with the fire of divine love.

“Toward the close of the day, on the thirteenth of August, the Blessed Virgin fell into a trance, and remained wrapt in ecstatic contemplation of heavenly things till about midnight. Then came in great splendor and glory her Son Jesus, surrounded by choirs of angelic spirits, and filling her humble abode with a flood of celestial brightness. All those who were present saw, with their bodily eyes, Jesus and the angels, and inferred from this dazzling display of glory and majesty that Mary in her holy communings and contemplations was indeed enjoying a foretaste of heaven. Jesus, bending over the prostrate form of His dying mother, impressed a kiss upon her pallid brow, and said, in gentle tones, Be of good courage, dearest mother, and rejoice; for the happy hour has come at last that is to see thee united with Me forever in paradise. Mary replied in feeble voice: Blessed art Thou, sweet Lord and Saviour; thanks to Thee for being pleased to come to release me from my long and dreary exile.”

And now the heavenly choirs broke forth in softest, sweetest strains to sing: “Thou art all fair, O Virgin, and there is no stain in thee. Thy lips are sweet as honey; milk and honey are under thy tongue. Thy eyes are soft as the eyes of doves; thy lips are delicate as the pomegranate, and the perfumes of thy virtues are beyond the sweetest spices. Rejoice, for winter is over; the rain storm has passed by, the flowers are coming forth, the blossoming vineyard gives forth its fragrance, and the voices of birds are heard in the land. Make haste, arise, princess; come down from Libanus, and thou shalt be crowned. Alleluia!” Then as the hour of midnight struck, the condescending Jesus, with joyous words, invited His beloved Mother to heaven, saying: “Arise, My friend, My chosen one; I will place thee on My throne, for I have long desired thee.” Mary answered: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. The Lord hath looked down upon the lowliness of His handmaid, and behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. I am ready, O Lord! my soul is ready. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” Hereupon the sovereignty of divine majesty stooped down and entered into the humble heart of

the Virgin, filling it with such overpowering consolation that her holy soul was completely absorbed in God. And thus this pure and immaculate soul was gently separated from her body by an ecstasy of delight, and borne away by her own divine Son and the angels to the throne of the adorable Trinity.

The old reliable legend continues: "Very soon three devout and sinless maidens prepared the sacred remains of the Blessed Virgin for the grave; wrapping it in new white linen; while the apostles, in another room assembled, sang the psalms and hymns in praise of their departed Mother. On their way to the grave, St. John walked ahead, bearing in his hand the palm-branch brought from paradise by the angel. The chief apostles, Peter and Paul, with the aid of others, carried the precious remains. All the disciples, all the faithful dwelling in Jerusalem, followed with solemn, slow and reverent pace, chanting psalms and hymns in which even angels' voices were heard to mingle. The remains were thus conducted out to the valley of Josaphat, and gently placed by sorrowing friends in a sepulcher of stone, not far from the garden of Olives." After the entombment, all the apostles and crowds of the faithful lingered near the sacred spot in prayer, meditation and chanting of psalms, till the third day, which was the fifteenth of August, when, according to well-authenticated history, the sacred body itself of Mary was translated into heaven.

5. HER GLORIOUS ASSUMPTION

The Church commemorates every year, on the glorious festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, this miraculous translation of the body and soul of Mary into heaven. Many learned writers are of the opinion that this festival was established by the apostles themselves. History testifies that it was known in the East as early as the time of Constantine the Great, and universally observed with much pomp and devotion. In the West we find it to have been kept as one of the first-class festivals of the Church in the sixth century. As may be seen from the ancient prayers appointed to be recited on this feast, the Church commemorated not only the admission of Mary's soul into heaven, but also the miraculous translation of her body; for although the doctrine of the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven was not at the time a defined article of faith in the strict sense, yet as the learned Pope Benedict remarks, it would be presump-

tuous and blameworthy in any one to call into question or to doubt this beautiful and consoling belief of ages.

6. HER CROWNING IN HEAVEN

To the mystery of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church joins that of her glorious coronation in heaven. For it was reasonable and becoming that she who once with Jesus wore the thorny crown of shame and contempt should now share with Him the crown of immortal glory. It was but fair and just that the immaculate being who was chosen, above all the inhabitants of heaven and of earth, to be the true and worthy Mother of the Son of God, should now be solemnly installed over all creatures in heaven and earth, as the queen of men and of angels, and that to her should be offered homage, praise and honor by the nine choirs of the blessed spirits, as well as by the souls of the saints. It was right and proper that the illustrious and privileged parent to whom in life even the Son of God was obedient should now be endowed in heaven with great power and authority, so that whatever she asks of Him may be granted to her.

Therefore, look up, O poor, sin-burdened soul! look up to that beaming, brilliant queen of heaven. Your gentle Mother tells you that she will help you; and the diadem which she wears upon her brow is a proof that she has power to help you. Do not refuse the hand of this powerful friend in heaven, for she will lift you from the depths of your misery, from the rocky shoals of temptation, and lead you strong and victorious into the presence of her divine Son. Thus you will awake into a new and supernatural life in Christ Jesus, to share in the grace-laden mysteries of His life, passion, and triumph.

O great, glorious and illustrious queen of heaven! Forget us not. On account of sin, this earth was accursed, and the crown of thorns which grew from its accursed bosom have wounded our heads. O Mary, glorious Mother of Him Who changed the curse into a blessing, and Who placed upon His own brow the crown of thorns in atonement for our sins! O Mary, adorned with the shining crown of eternal glory! forget us not. Heal the wounds which the thorns of sin have made in our souls, lighten our tribulation of soul, and help us with thy motherly intercession before the throne of thy Son. Obtain for us the grace to pass our lives in the practice of such purity, that these bodies of ours, although inex-

orably doomed to pass through the corruption of the grave, may on the last day arise to put on never-ending incorruption. Amen.

CHAPTER VII

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST MYSTERIOUSLY AND MIRACULOUSLY CONTINUED IN HIS CHURCH UPON EARTH

1. THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH. ITS NATURE

STEP by step, under the guidance of the holy evangelists, we have accompanied our Blessed Lord through His earthly life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, and thence to Mount Tabor, where we witnessed His triumphant ascent into heaven. We have heard Him preaching heavenly truth to the Jews of His time, we have beheld Him granting saving grace to men of good will, and we have seen Him attesting and sealing His words of truth and His works of power and of mercy by His atoning death upon the cross.

And now the question arises: What is Christ to us, to all the generations who have lived and died during the long lapse of time since He dwelt upon earth? No one of our generation has looked upon Christ with corporeal eye. No one of us has heard His words of wisdom, or felt the touch of His blessed hand. We have not been permitted to stand with Mary, and John, and Magdalen under the cross, nor to be sprinkled like them with His saving blood. He has ascended into heaven, and now sits in unapproachable majesty at the right hand of His Father; whilst we are living in exile upon earth. How then can we have any share in the truth, blessings, and graces of this Christ?

Our question is a vain and foolish one. If we but look with the eye of faith, we will soon easily discover that this same Christ, with all the fulness of His wisdom, power, and mercy, is still living in our midst, as He had promised to do: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Let us therefore examine and study carefully the plan adopted by our Saviour, whereby He continues still to dwell in our midst, forwarding the work of salvation in all lands, and during all time.

Christ redeemed us as Teacher, as Priest, and as King: as Teacher, by preaching heavenly wisdom; as Priest, by the atoning sacrifice offered upon the cross; and as King, by enacting and inculcating laws or commandments. As teacher, He rescued us from spiritual blindness by giving us the truth of heaven; as divine-human Priest, He redeemed us from the guilt of sin by offering Himself in sacrifice on Mount Calvary; as God-man-king, He saved us by His maxims and commandments from folly and wickedness of life.

And now, if this teaching office, this priesthood, and this kingly authority still and truly exist upon earth, the Redeemer Himself must still live really and truly upon earth.

That Christ lives in the mystical body of the Church upon earth as our Teacher, there can be no doubt. Call to mind how this divine Teacher sent forth His apostles to preach to all nations, to teach all truth as He had imparted it to them, and to teach it with the same authority and infallible certainty as He Himself had taught it: "He who hears you hears Me."

Call to mind how our divine High-priest, on the eve of His passion, instituted and offered up, in a mysterious manner and by anticipation, the saving sacrifice, saying: "This is My body which shall be delivered for you, this is My blood which shall be shed for you." Remember, too, how He committed to the hands of the apostles for all time to come this holy sacrifice of His body and blood, saying: "Do this," as I have just done, "in commemoration of Me." Recall to mind how He gave to the apostles power to baptize, to forgive sins, to bless; in a word, to so dispense graces in His name that these same apostles were able to say later of themselves with truth: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ; and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." (1 *Cor.* iv. 1.)

Remember, finally, how our divine King transmitted His spiritual prerogatives of royalty to the apostles, with the words: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. As the Father sent Me, so I send you." It was by virtue of this charge that the apostles prescribed for all the nations to whom they preached, all those laws and regulations, and established all those arrangements, which they deemed necessary for the spiritual welfare, or conducive to the eternal salvation of men.

Hence, we see clearly that although Christ has returned to heaven, He has not left us orphans, but has been pleased to remain mystically with us, carrying on, through His apostles, as His chosen instruments, His threefold office of Redeemer

till the end of time. In union with their Head, St. Peter, the apostles were to traverse the earth, preaching, dispensing graces, ordaining and becoming fishers of men, in order to bring all men to a share in the benefits of truth, grace, and salvation through Christ, to unite them to Jesus Himself in oneness of life, and to join them together in one large and glorious mystical body of which Christ was to be the invisible Head.

Such was the duty imposed by Christ on His apostles. But the apostles were mortal, and died, one after the other, during the first century of Christianity. The threefold office of teacher, priest, and ruler committed to them by Christ should endure till the end of time. Hence it is clear that when the divine Founder of our Church imparted this threefold power to His apostles, in order to perpetuate His Church, He meant not only the twelve men standing there and then in His presence, but that His divine gaze extended to all their lawful successors, the popes, bishops, and priests to the end of the world, as if they stood all in His presence when He spoke. In this sense it was that He said to them all: "Lo, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

The apostles, therefore, and their legitimate successors, are the persons to whom Christ entrusted the duty of forming, in His name, among all nations and in all ages, a holy community or spiritual society; or rather of extending and strengthening the original society established by Himself.

This spiritual society, consisting originally of the apostles, disciples, and a few devout believers, became like the mustard seed of the parable, a great tree, whose branches were spread over all the earth. And this is the universal or Catholic Church, in which Christ, by the instrumentality of His apostles and their successors, perpetuates forever His work of salvation, and applies it to each individual soul. His truth, His saving grace, His redeeming sacrifice, all His merits as God-man from His birth to His death; these are the glorious treasures of this society, the riches of that grand corporation in which each member who has been duly admitted by baptism has a right to participate.

2. HOW THE HOLY GHOST INSPIRES THE CHURCH

If it is true, as it certainly is, that our divine Founder entrusted the duty and the power to the apostles and their successors of directing His holy Church in sanctity and truth,

they had a very difficult and onerous duty to perform. The work was above human strength and sagacity, while the apostles themselves, as well as their successors, were mere men, liable to death and sin, exposed to error and changes. How could such incapable men accomplish this superhuman task? And granting that the apostles had been confirmed in their faith, in sanctity of life, in zeal for God's kingdom upon earth, by Jesus Christ Himself, and hence succeeded in preserving pure and unchanged His sacred legacy of truth and holiness among the nations of their times, how could their successors in the course of centuries be expected to enjoy similar strength and holiness? Whence were they to draw it? Alas! poor human nature is sadly prone to whims, to passion, to instability, and change. And will not this corruption of human nature so affect the leaders in God's Church that in a few years after the death of the apostles the work of Christ will languish, die, and be forgotten?

How many societies have been established within the lapse of nineteen hundred years, many with the very best and most laudable ends in view; founded, too, in the wisdom and experience of wise men, carried on with prudence and sagacity! Yet in the course of time evil crept in, they changed, became corrupt, fell to pieces, and have long since been forgotten even in history. Will not the society of the Church encounter a similar fate?

Certainly not; for glory, honor, and praise be to God, this society has not only been founded by Christ, but He has moreover infused into it for all time a divine vital power. He has sent truly His own Holy Spirit, as is related in the Acts of the Apostles in the following words of the evangelist, St. Luke:

“And when the days of the Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue. And

they were all amazed, and wondered, saying: Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans, and how have we heard every man our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotomia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also, and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; we have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all astonished, and wondered, saying one to another, What meaneth this? But others, mocking, said: These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke to them: Ye men of Judea, and all you that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you, and with your ears receive my words; for these are not drunk, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass, in the last days (saith the Lord), I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And upon My servants indeed, and upon My handmaids will I pour out in those days of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy. Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you also know; this same, being delivered up, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you, by the hands of wicked men, have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses. Being exalted, therefore, by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this which you see and hear."

From this we can understand why the Catholic Church is the only one among all the institutions upon the earth that remains unchanged and unchangeable; why with her, truth has never been adulterated or obscured, even in the ages of darkest ignorance in the world; why her saving graces, amid all the corruptions of men, have never been weakened nor diminished. She was made immortal for all time by the infusion of God's breath, the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost. Yes, the Holy Ghost dwells within her, that Spirit which renews the face of the earth as the Psalmist sings; that good and comforting Spirit mentioned in the book of Wisdom; that

Spirit of knowledge and understanding, of counsel and fortitude, of understanding and piety, foretold by Isaias; that Spirit which comes to aid us in our weakness, as St. Paul writes to the Romans; that Spirit promised by Christ to His apostles, who was to teach them all things and to lead them to all truth.

Since the Catholic Church has really received this Holy Spirit as her own life and soul and strength, the personal faults of her visible rulers and leaders can do her no real harm. She remains always the same, even if some of her members fall into error and crime and desert her. Pure, spotless, and immortal, she remains the pillar and ground of truth, as St. Paul styles her; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

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